



## ***Exhibiting Tips***

The Montana Department of Agriculture is proud to offer qualified agricultural companies assistance with developing existing markets and reaching new markets by exhibiting at wholesale trade shows that are consistent with a company's marketing plans and goals. Department's support includes reimbursement for a percentage of the total cost of exhibiting at trade shows, advice on show exhibiting, and a supplemental packet of information with exhibiting tips.

To access the tips, click on the links below. To view the Trade Show Assistance Program guidelines, click [here](#).

If you have any questions, contact the Marketing Officer at (406) 444-2402 or by email at [agr@mt.gov](mailto:agr@mt.gov).

*Information in this Supplement was compiled from a variety of Internet sources. If you have any questions about this information, contact the Marketing Officer at (406) 444-2402 or by email at [agr@mt.gov](mailto:agr@mt.gov).*

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## Introduction

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### Ten Ways To Justify Show Participation

Why should my company participate in trade shows?

Regardless of company size, trade shows provide an excellent opportunity to collect qualified leads, make sales and build relationships. Trade shows can complement your other sales and marketing mediums. Choose and use them well, and you will realize many benefits. Consider these:

1. More bang for your buck. Trade shows are one of the most cost-effective ways for your company to reach qualified audiences. According to a study by Exhibit Surveys Inc., the average cost per visitor reached at a trade show is \$177, while the average cost of a field sales call is \$295. You do the math.
2. Less work, more fulfilling. Trade show sales leads require less effort to close. Research by Exhibit Surveys indicates that only .8 calls are needed to close a qualified trade show lead, compared to 3.7 calls to close a typical business sale. Also, 54 percent of all orders placed as a result of a trade show lead require no personal follow-up visit, according to another study by the McGraw-Hill Research Foundation.
3. Fresh faces. A study by Exhibit Surveys shows only 12 percent of the average exhibitor's booth traffic have been called on by a salesperson from that company in the 12 months prior to the show; 88 percent are new prospects. Furthermore, trade shows bring you high-quality visitors. Eighty-two percent of an exhibit's visitors have buying influence for the exhibiting company's products or services, and 49 percent of an exhibit's visitors are planning to buy those products or services.
4. Competitive edge. Trade shows offer your company another opportunity to stand out from the crowd. You can outshine the competition with a well-trained booth staff, aggressive pre- and at-show promotion, eye-catching booth design, and conscientious follow-up after the show. Also, trade show attendees use the opportunity to "comparison shop." So this is your opening to point out where your product is superior - in performance, pricing, service, etc.
5. "Face time." You can reach more prospects in a three-day period than your sales force can in three months. Meeting prospects face to face is also the fastest way to build relationships.
6. Customer bonding. Customer service is a hot topic for many companies. Trade shows are an excellent place to reinforce existing customer relationships. Say "thanks" to key customers with hospitality suites, one-on-one dinners or special services, such as transportation to and from the convention center.
7. Hands-on learning. How much of your product line can your salespeople actually carry with them and demonstrate on the road? Probably not much. Trade shows are a great place for prospects to "test drive" your products.
8. Competitive analysis. The trade show floor provides an invaluable opportunity to study the competition. Where else can you find out so much information on a competitor's new product offerings, pricing and marketing strategies? Much can be learned by just watching and listening.
9. Media spotlight. Most shows (especially large events) attract lots of media attention. Use this to your advantage to gain media exposure. Be sure to invite key press contacts to visit your booth.

"Survey says-" Trade shows offer a great opportunity to conduct market research. If you're considering launching a new product or service, you can survey show attendees on pricing, distribution, features and benefits, and minimum quality requirements, among others.

### Trade Shows...Where Customers Come to You

Wouldn't it be nice to have hundreds or even thousands of potential customers visit you? One of today's best strategies for making your selling easier, less costly and more profitable is to become an exhibitor at a trade show.

There are thousands of trade shows throughout the USA and overseas every year offering opportunities for sellers and buyers to meet face to face. They range from commercially sponsored trade shows on travel to large shows such as the American Association of Retired Person's trade show on products and services for those over 50. By getting involved, you can share travel products and services with pre-selected audiences with specific interests, do comparative shopping to shorten the buying process, maintain a positive image, continue contact with potential customers and qualified buyers, introduce new products and services, investigate the competition and conduct market research.

To ensure your success at Trade shows, follow these guidelines:

1. Set your goals. In determining what shows to get into you need to know who are the types of people you need to meet and what shows they attend.
2. Be proactive. Don't just sit in your booth; interact with people who pass by. You will miss a lot of opportunities if you wait for people to stop and ask questions.
3. Give immediate attention to people entering your booth. Trade show attendees hate to wait. Make sure you have at least two people at the booth so you can engage people walking by and interact with browsers.
4. Develop a 60 second presentation. You need to have a quick and to-the-point presentation describing your product/service and the benefits you offer.
5. Qualify your prospects. Before going into a presentation about what you have to offer find out the following:
  - Can they afford your products/services?
  - Can the prospect influence the purchase?
  - Is there a need for your product/service?
  - Determine the visitors place in the buying cycle.
  - Be aware of body language
6. Record information about the prospect and get a business card. Write any additional information about the prospect on their business card.
7. Stress what's in it for them. Present the benefits and the features.
8. Offer proof - show credibility. Have testimonials, articles, guarantees, pictures of people having a great time on a trip, videos and television interviews.
9. Follow-up after the show. This is the biggest mistake many exhibitors make. They fail to follow up. If you don't do this the time and expense of the trade show will be a disappointment.

# Planning

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## Beating The Deadlines: Step-By-Step Guide To Trade Show Planning

Perfect timing is critical for trade show planning. Here's an exhibiting task schedule to help you stay ahead of the deadlines.

When you're planning for a show of any size, the logistical details can seem overwhelming. One method of control is to develop a time line to help you stay on top of each detail. Think of it as your "to-do" list.

The following outline provides you with a basic list of details you need to track when planning for a show. (Feel free to add your own items.) Keep in mind that the suggested time frame (three months out, two months out, etc.) is just that - a suggestion. Your timetable may differ slightly depending on the complexity of the project. Use this as a guideline to develop your own ideal show planning time line.

### Countdown to Show Time

#### 12 Months Out

- Determine purpose for participating in show.
- Select space: Study floor plans, traffic patterns, services, audience makeup.
- Read contract carefully: Understand terms, show rules, payment schedule, space assignment method (by product category, seniority, membership, etc.).
- Send in space application and first payment.
- Prepare budget.

#### Six Months Out

- Determine exhibit objectives.
- Select primary vendors (exhibit house, transportation company, installation/dismantle supplier).
- Decide if new exhibit is needed. If so, begin design process. (If using a portable, the design process may not require this much lead time.)
- Plan show advertising.

#### Four Months Out

- Select staff.
- Make airline, hotel and car reservations.
- Determine exhibit needs (if using existing properties): refurbishments, additions, changes.
- Select display products.
- Plan inquiry processing procedures.
- Communicate with primary vendors (exhibit house, shipping, installation/dismantle) regarding services needed and dates.
- Develop floor plan for exhibit.
- Finalize new exhibit design.
- Execute show-related advertising.

#### Three Months Out

- Carefully read and review exhibitor manual.
- Select portable exhibit supplier.
- Review exhibit floor plan and note target dates and restrictions.
- Plan any in-booth presentations/demonstrations.
- Create list of required services, noting deadlines for "early-bird" discounts.
- Distribute show plan to staff.
- Reserve any additional meeting rooms (hospitality events, press conferences, etc.)
- Select catering menus (for hospitality events, press events, etc.)

Meet deadlines for free publicity in the exhibitor guide/preview.  
Submit authorization form if you are using an exhibitor-appointed contractor.  
Plan pre-show meeting.

## Two Months Out

Preview new custom exhibit.  
Finalize graphics art/copy.  
Order staff badges.  
Send information to other departments exhibiting in booth.  
Create and order lead forms. Finalize inquiry processing procedures.  
Prepare orders for: drayage, electrical, cleaning, floral, etc. Take advantage of any pre-pay discounts.  
Follow up on all promotions, making sure everything is ready to ship by target date.  
Prepare press kits.  
Check with staff on airline and hotel reservations and travel dates. Make needed changes.  
Develop briefing packet for booth staff.  
Schedule training for booth staff at show.  
Send reminder to upper management about briefing meetings (in office and at show); include agenda.

## One Month Out

Follow up on shipping orders.  
Follow up on installation/dismantle schedule; get an estimate on costs.  
Call to reconfirm airline, hotel and car reservations. Make needed changes.  
Follow up on target dates with all vendors.  
Confirm availability of display products/literature.  
Preview new portable display.  
Send all needed materials by target shipping date to avoid express mail shipments.  
Distribute briefing packet, including training materials, to all booth staffers.  
Set up and hold pre-show briefing meeting in office.  
Set up in-booth conference room schedule for pre-arranged meetings at show.  
Send follow-up reminder to upper management about briefing meeting, include agenda.  
Determine date and time for briefing staff at the exhibit. Review agenda, purpose of show, demonstrations, rehearsals, show specials, etc.  
Ensure that you have the following items before leaving for the show: traveler's checks, credit cards, copies of all orders and checks for services paid in advance, phone numbers and addresses of all vendors, engineering certificate for exhibit, shipping manifest, return shipping labels, and additional badge forms.



## Upon Arrival

- Check on freight arrival.
- Check with hotel about reservations for staff, as well as any meeting rooms and catering orders.
- Find service area. Meet electrician and confirm date and time for electrical installation.
- Supervise booth setup.
- Hold pre-show briefing and training for staff the day before the show.

## During Show

- Reserve next year's space.
- Conduct daily meetings with staff.
- Make arrangements for booth dismantle and shipping.
- Arrange for lead forms to be shipped back to office daily for processing.

## After Show

- Supervise booth dismantle.
- Handle leads.
- Debrief staff.
- Send thank-you notes.

# X Marks The Best Space

What factors should I consider when selecting an exhibit space at a show?

Booth space selection is always a gamble. In some cases, you don't know what you're going to end up with. It often depends on a show's selection process (priority points, lottery drawing, etc.). Sometimes you just have to make the best of the spot you're given. But that doesn't mean you should come to the space selection process unprepared. There are three important variables to consider when choosing a booth space: booth size, configuration and hall location. Keep in mind, your goal is to select a space and configuration that provide maximum exposure to show traffic.

### 1. Space requirements

The size of your booth should be based on the size of your potential audience at a show. Too large a booth is a waste of money; too small a booth and you're looking at gridlock. To calculate your potential audience, use this formula created by Exhibit Surveys. Multiply the net attendance by the Audience Interest Factor. The AIF indicates the percentage of high-interest attendees (those who visit at least two out of every 10 exhibits at a show). If the AIF is not available from show management, use the industry average of 52 percent.

Then multiply the number of high-interest attendees by the percentage of attendees who indicate a high level of interest in your products. Again, if this figure is not available from show management, use the industry average of 16 percent.

Now you must determine how many booth staffers are required based on the size of your potential audience. Start by dividing your potential audience by the total show hours. This will help you calculate the number of contacts booth staffers must make per hour. The number of visitors that booth staffers can handle per hour varies, but the average is 12 (five minutes per visitor).

Next you are ready to determine your space requirements. How much open space is needed per booth staffer? ("Open space" is space not occupied by exhibit structure or product displays.) Multiply the number of staffers needed per hour by 50 square feet.

Finally, to calculate the total exhibit space needed, add the amount of open space needed to the amount of space occupied by the exhibit structure and product displays. (Your exhibit house should be able to provide you with the amount of space required by your exhibit properties.)

## 2. Type of configuration

There are four types of exhibit configurations:

- In-line (also called linear) - Small (200 square feet and under) and typically surrounded on three sides by other exhibits, the in-line is easy to overlook. Only one side of your exhibit is exposed to aisle traffic. Shows tend to group in-lines, especially the 10-foot configurations, which doesn't help. Also many shows place height restrictions on in-lines. If you choose an in-line, think of ways to make your exhibit jump out at attendees. A simplistic example: If all the other 10-foot booths typically are white, paint your exhibit red. Another tip: Choose a corner location, which gives you an added aisle of exposure.
- Island - Island exhibits are typically larger (400 square feet and up) and surrounded by aisles on all four sides. They offer maximum exposure. The island configuration also offers exhibitors more design flexibility. The challenge is to create an exhibit that is attractive and accessible from all sides.
- Peninsula - As the name suggests, three sides of the peninsula configuration are exposed to aisle traffic. The fourth side sits against a neighboring exhibit, which provides a nice focal point for the booth design. If you choose a peninsula, avoid adding side walls (also called "returns") to the back wall. These act as barriers.
- Cross-aisle - Cross-aisle exhibits are two in-line spaces directly across the aisle from each other. Typically, the aisle must be left clear. However, depending on show rules, you could build an archway or ceiling to connect the two spaces. Cross-aisles are usually larger than in-lines (10 feet deep and 30 to 60 feet long). The big bonus with cross-aisle configurations is that attendees must pass through them to advance down the aisle. For that 30- to 60-foot stretch, you're all they see, no matter which side of the aisle they look.

## 3. Location in the hall

A report released by the Trade Show Bureau states that "location in a show hall is neither a positive or a negative factor in booth traffic, performance or impact." But you'll have a difficult time finding an exhibit manager who buys that assessment. Most swear by the old real estate maxim about the key selling point of, in this case, exhibit space being "location, location, location."

Keep in mind there is no "best" location. Some locations might make more sense. But it would be wrong to say, for example, that a center island space is always best. Every show and show hall is unique.

Also, sometimes your location is dictated by your booth configuration. Islands are usually in the center of the hall; in-lines on the outskirts.

When choosing a space, start by familiarizing yourself with a show's floor plan. Locate and consider how you want to be positioned in relation to the following:

- Competitors. How close do you want to be to your competitors? Do you want to be near an industry leader that will draw traffic to the surrounding area?
- Entrances and exits. Do people enter and exit the hall by the same doorway? If so, you will gain added exposure by choosing a spot nearby this high-traffic area. Also find out which entrance is closest to the registration area. This will be the hall that attendees are most likely to visit first. You'll catch them when they're still fresh.
- Restrooms. Yes, they draw traffic. But experience shows that attendees visiting these areas have other things on their minds.
- Food service. You face the same problems as with locating near the restrooms: Visitors are distracted. Another issue is garbage. If you're too close to food service, your exhibit could become an easy dumping ground for paper cups, napkins and plastic wrap.
- Escalators and elevators. Which are used most frequently to access different levels? Given a choice, you might take a space near a down escalator over a spot next to an enclosed elevator. The view of your exhibit is better as attendees descend into the hall.
- Corners. Front corners of the hall are OK; back corners are a no-no.
- Windows. Beware of strong sunlight that could wash out your backlit graphics and AV presentations.
- Seminars. Where are the seminar rooms located? Will attendees be pouring into the hall from the same entrance following each seminar?
- Utilities. Does your booth have any special needs that require it to be located near power, water, gas or air sources?

Finally, here are some areas to avoid in the hall:

- Obstructing columns.
- Low ceilings.
- Dark or poorly lit areas.
- Ceiling water pipes.
- Dead-end aisles.
- Loading docks and freight doors.
- Late setup areas.

Don't assume these are marked on the show floor plan. Always ask.

## Five Exhibit Logistics Tips To Save Time And Money

You can fly to the show early, stay up late and bite your nails. Or you can save your nerves, your nails (and some money) by following these tips for bringing your exhibit in on time and within budget.

1. Ship early, but don't ship to the warehouse. With most shows, it costs significantly less in drayage to ship your freight directly to the show site vs. to the general contractor's warehouse. How can you take advantage of those savings and still avoid the expense that goes along with show-site freight delivery (especially when shipping in bad-weather months)?

Try this trick: Ship early, and tell your carrier you want your freight held in the show city and delivered on the first direct-ship date. Many carriers (especially those that handle a lot of freight) will hold your truckload shipments for a minimal charge. You get the benefit of headache-free shipping and the savings of direct drayage rates.

2. Let your carpet travel on its own. Want to start installing your booth at the first possible hour without paying the higher costs of shipping your display to the warehouse? It's easy. Ship your carpet and pad to the contractor's warehouse, and ship your exhibit directly to the show site. Since warehouse freight typically is brought in first, your I&D company can lay your electrical, pad and carpet while your direct freight is being brought into the hall. The drayage rate savings from shipping your display direct will more than cover the extra freight charges you pay to ship the carpet and pad separately.
3. Send your exhibit's lead carpenter, not your account executive, to supervise setup. When your display house's account executive offers to accompany your booth on the road, say, "Thanks, but no thanks." Then instruct them to send your lead carpenter instead. For out-of-town installations, you're better off having the carpenter supervise installation and breakdown. Who's best to handle display-based problems? Clearly, the carpenter who prepped the display before it went on the road. Take advantage of that person's knowledge and experience in getting your booth up right - and fast - and save those daily account executive charges.
4. Make a map for the electricians. Don't wait for the electricians to come to your space to start your electrical work. Ship your I&D company your electrical (and other utilities) plans, and have them send a carpenter to mark the floor and supervise electrical installation. By installing your utilities early, you will avoid paying for labor to wait around to get started or work overtime to finish. When you and your display arrive, your space will be ready for carpet and pad, and you'll be off to a great start.
5. Inspect your booth at the close of the show. Rather than waiting for the display to return to your exhibit house to do a refurb inspection, take a walk-through at the close of the show with your lead carpenter. If you make a list of the needed repairs before your display goes back into the crates, you'll save on inspection charges. Before your next show, you and your lead carpenter will know just what needs to be done.

Remember, the fundamentals still hold true: Planning and foresight will ease the confusion of trade shows and ensure that you come in on budget.

## How to Select an Exhibit Designer/Producer

### Types of Exhibit Designer/Producer Firms

Exhibit designer/producer firms provide a variety of products and services for the creation of three-dimensional communication devices...exhibits.

There are numerous exhibit designer/producer firms varying in size and capabilities from small, single location companies with less than a dozen employees to large, multi-location firms with several hundred employees. Some firms offer very limited service while others offer a

full range of trade show marketing functions. The balance of capabilities and services you choose depends on your company's needs and preferences.

The types of firms are:

- Total Trade Show Marketing Firm
- Full-Service Designer/Producer
- Exhibit Builder
- Systems Marketer
- Independent Design Firm
- Marketing Communications Agency
- Advertising Agency

### Services

Proper selection of a designer/producer firm begins with a clear understanding of the services offered, and how those services match up with your program requirements. It is important to understand that not all firms offer a complete selection of the services, however, many firms have experience with procurement of these services within the trade show medium.

A few of the services offered:

- Budgeting
- Show Selection
- Space Selection
- Exhibit Design and Strategy
- Graphic Design and Production
- Exhibit Production
- Show Service Logistics
- Refurbishing
- Storage
- Sales Training
- Show Site Supervision
- Lead Management

### When You Need an Exhibit Designer/Producer Firm

Whether your trade show program is small or very large, you may need an exhibit designer/producer. These firms have people on their staffs who are trained and experienced in specific segments of the overall process of exhibit design, fabrication, development and service.

If you are a company with a relatively small exhibit program, you may be able to purchase a portable exhibit and some signage and, more or less, "do it yourself." But even at this level, more and more companies are hiring designer/producer firms to provide the exhibit and develop the display and the graphics.

### How to Start Looking for a Designer/Producer Firm

The decision-making process in selecting a designer/producer will vary depending upon the size and structure of the exhibiting organizations. The decision may be made by the owner, president, marketing specialists or a committee of them all.

Prior to the commencement of the selection process, it is important that everyone involved understands and agrees on the following:

- Trade show marketing objectives
- Point of contact or committee chairperson
- Selection criteria - review process
- Uniform interview process

After organizing your thoughts and procedures, the next step is selecting firms to interview. There are several ways to locate these companies.

- Pull the "file"
- Consult your peers
- Observe others at shows
- Check publications
- Contact professional associations
- Attend trade show marketing trade shows

Use caution. A little caution at the beginning can save a lot of time throughout the process.

### **Initial Selection Factors**

Begin with an initial list of three to five potential firms. More than five will generally overburden the process. Consider the following:

- Location
- General size and capability
- Financial stability
- Staff
- Pulse on the future

Initially, conduct a brief phone interview, ask specific questions and request specific follow-up.

### **Screening and Qualifying**

Once you have determined your requirements for a designer/producer and compiled a preliminary list, your selection team should reduce the list to no more than three firms.

Face-to-face interviews are suggested rather than conducting the process by mail or phone.

Make a preliminary visit to the designer/producer's facility and tour the entire facility, including their offices, design area, fabrication facility, graphic area and warehouse.

Contact some of the designer/producer's customers, discuss their programs and ask their opinions.

After you have done these things, reduce your number of prospects if there are firms which are questionable.

### **Presentations**

Now that you have conducted the interviews, visited the operations and checked references, the remaining firms should present their ideas to you. Before they can do this, you must present them with the necessary information to formulate their presentation.

Ask each designer/producer to respond with a proposal (not a design), explaining how they would develop your exhibit program. To help them do this, prepare a request for proposal (RFP) for the remaining designer/producers on your list. The RFP defines your overall project and outlines specific program objectives.

The response from the designer/producer should demonstrate how their ideas will meet the specific needs and goals outlined in your RFP.

At this point, you are not looking for a design. Expect a verbal presentation with ideas outlined and written, but not drawn.

Select your designer/producer at this point and begin the design process from here. This eliminates the costly and often misleading speculative design process. Should you require designs from several candidates prior to final selection, offer to pay the firms for their design time. Speculative design results in higher costs. Recent industry surveys indicate that less than 50% of speculative designs are sold. The cost of a speculative presentation often exceeds the industry average of approximately \$5,000. Speculative design costs are eventually absorbed by the client, increasing the cost of every exhibit panel, cabinet or graphic that is sold. (In reality, the free speculative design is not free at all.) Selecting your designer/producer at this point will provide many benefits.

## Compensation for Services

Today, most designer/producer firms do much more for their clients than simply design and build exhibits. They provide a full array of services. Compensation for these products and services can take place in a variety of ways.

Know what your specific requirements are. Discuss compensation methods and preferences with your designer/producer during the early stages of design and development.

## No Roadies Required: Setup Specs For Small Exhibits

Ideal setup specs for 10- and 20-foot spaces. So you've decided to conduct a presentation in your 10-foot booth. Now you're wondering how you'll fit a stage, sound system and special lighting in a space the size of a large closet (and still have room for the audience)? Here are some practical setup guidelines:

1. **Stage.** You don't need (or want) a raised stage in a 10- or 20-foot booth. A raised platform creates an imaginary "distance" between the presenter and the audience. Strive for a more intimate setting - appropriate to your small booth. Of course, you want to create an official "stage area" in the booth. But this can be accomplished by simply using a different color of carpet in the area designated for the presenter to stand.

You should still set out chairs - to encourage visitors to "stay awhile." The chairs also signal to passers-by that you have a presentation in your booth.

2. **Sound system.** In a 10-foot booth, the surrounding noise can be a big distraction. Your presenter must be amplified if you want to hold your audience's attention. Your sound system should include:
  - **Wired headset microphone.** With a headset microphone, the presenter doesn't have to worry about holding anything. Also, a headset microphone only picks up the presenter's voice. Avoid using a lapel microphone, which can "lose" sound when the presenter turns his or her head, or a lavalier microphone (the kind worn around your neck), which literally picks up every movement the presenter makes. A wired headset microphone won't be affected by other wireless systems on the show floor. Finally, a wired microphone is more affordable than a wireless. Let's face it, your presenter isn't going anywhere in a 10-foot booth, so the wire won't even be noticed.
  - **Speaker/amp combination.** If you explain to any good sound company that you want a speaker/amp combination, they'll know you're talking about a very basic sound system. The speaker should be as small as possible. Remember, you only need to project to the end of your booth. The cost for this type of sound system will vary, but the rental price should be no more than \$350 per week.
3. **Lighting.** Nothing sets your presentation apart more easily and affordably than lighting. Yet, most small exhibitors forget this critical element. You can install a 500-watt quartz light from the ceiling of your booth for about \$100. You can also use a portable truss system to hang smaller, more focused lights.
4. **Multimedia.** Today's sophisticated audiences "want their MTV." Graphics panels can be used as a backdrop to help tell a narrated product story. But they will not hold the audience's attention like a dynamic multimedia presentation. Use a combination of visually compelling graphics (they draw people from a distance and during breaks in the presentation) and multimedia. A 25-inch monitor will do the trick in a 10- or 20-foot booth.

The secret to affordable multimedia is making the most of what you already have. You can "create your own" multimedia presentations on computer - if you have the proper equipment. Collect as many collateral materials as possible (ads, brochures, logos, existing video footage). Integrate them into a computer file that allows you to manipulate and edit the visuals. If you're not capable of doing this, any video producer can create a computer template for you for under \$3,000. (Keep in mind, this is very basic stuff.)

Some tips for creating your own multimedia presentations:

- Images should change every two to three seconds.
- Copy should match what the presenter is saying; otherwise you'll confuse your audience.
- Use only the best quality visuals, even if that means using fewer visuals.

Multimedia can be complex. When in self-doubt about your abilities to create a multimedia presentation, you are better off paying a professional to do it.

## Avoid The 'Cluttered' Look

Ideally, you should limit the number of actual products displayed in a small booth to no more than two. However, there will be times when you're forced to load up your booth with products (because product managers insist "it all has to be there"). Your goal should be to try to keep the products out of the center of the booth. Here are some design suggestions to keep your booth uncluttered and approachable.

### Hang products on the backwall.

Create step progressions on the sides of your booth; products can sit on the "steps."

Design drawers and bins into the booth. Products can be mounted on vertical surfaces that slide in and out of cabinets.

## Signage Pointers

Well-executed promotional signage can energize your exhibit. Here are four areas to consider when selecting in-booth graphics (and a signage vendor).

**Durability requirements.** How many times will you use the graphic? Once or for several shows? Knowledgeable vendors will suggest a compatible substrate and printing process to meet your durability needs without compromising quality.

**Packaging and delivery.** Will your signs require tubes, boxes or crates? How well will the graphic stand up to the rigors of transportation? Make sure your graphic will arrive safe and on time.

**Problem correction.** If you find a typo less than 24 hours before the event, how will it be corrected? Since Murphy's Law rules at trade shows, you always want to have a back-up plan.

**Installation requirements.** If you plan to place a hanging sign from the ceiling of your exhibit or the exhibit hall, how high is it? Will it require special equipment to hang the sign? Before you buy, have a clear understanding of any special costs for signage installation.

## Contracting For Exhibit Production

When negotiating with an exhibit producer, explore your options for payment. Payment schedules can affect costs. By contracting a fixed annual fee for personnel and overhead, plus a small handling charge for field services, you can cut expenses and budget more accurately. A fixed fee can reduce your field costs significantly.

## Critical Paperwork For Shows

No, you can't haul your whole file cabinet to a show. So here are the critical files that should go with you.

1. The exhibitor's manual, which gives you information on show rules and key show management contacts.
2. A copy of the original booth space contract, confirming booth location and charges.
3. Phone numbers of key contacts (including after-hours numbers for emergencies). Bring phone numbers for people from your display house, transportation company and setup firm, as well as any other important suppliers.
4. Paperwork documenting special arrangements, such as permission for using an independent contractor or for early move-in.
5. Proof of payment for shows, including copies of checks and credit card receipts.
6. Copies of all service order forms. That way, if the supplier misplaces your order, you can prove your advance order and avoid paying at-show rates.
7. A copy of your shipping schedule. Include origin and destination points, piece counts, arrival dates, phone numbers and charges.
8. An inventory of the contents of each crate, total crate count and records of any identifying markings on the crates.
9. A duplicate set of setup drawings, in case the originals disappear.
10. Photographs of your exhibit to serve as visual aids for the setup crew.

## Emphasizing Your Tabletop

Exhibiting with a small tabletop doesn't relegate you to certain obscurity. Try the following trick to get your exhibit higher in the air, thus making your header more visible.

Purchase a four-foot length of PVC pipe with an inch-and-a-half diameter. Cut the pipe into four equal lengths. On each piece, measure four inches down from one end and drill a hole straight through the pipe. Insert a bolt all the way through the pipe and secure with a nut.

When you get to the next show, place the legs of your table into the tubes. You've just put your exhibit on stilts. (Most exhibit hall tables have legs made of 1-inch-thick steel tubing, so this trick should work.)

## Establish A Rental Returns Policy

Before you leave town at the end of a show, make sure everything you rented for the booth gets returned. Otherwise, you'll be charged a penalty. Don't rely on I&D workers to know which items are rentals and which are not. Make a list of all rental items that need to be returned when the show closes (such as card readers, furniture, plants, wastebaskets, surge protectors, etc.). Then assign someone the job of handling "returns."

## If You've Got A Sale, Flaunt It

Serious shoppers are always looking for a bargain. So if you're offering a "show special," be sure to let attendees know. To lure bargain-hunters at the National Plant Engineering Show, Ingersoll-Rand placed big placards at each corner of its island booth to promote its "Show Special." The teaser copy read "Save Big \$\$\$ on a New Compressed Air System. Ask a Representative for Details." If you discount it, they will come.

## Lead-Gathering Tip

If attendees fill out their own lead forms in your exhibit, provide them with "golf pencils" rather than ink pens to do their writing. As a rule, attendees are more likely to leave your exhibit with pens in hand than small pencils. And pencils, which are much less expensive than pens, will save your company money - even when unwittingly escorted from your booth!

## Make A List, Copy It Twice

Do you make a list of items to pack before hitting the road for a show? If so, make a copy. Take one copy with you on the plane and leave one at home as a reference for the next trip. This way, if the airline loses your luggage, you'll have a complete list of items that are missing, which allows you to quickly fill out the airline's lost luggage form. The list also gives you a quick reference guide for items you need to replace for the trip, should your luggage be completely bon voyage.

## Planning For The Worst

You can carefully coordinate every aspect of your program, but when your exhibit and show materials are in transit, they're out of your hands. Because things rarely go according to plan, create a worst-case scenario for every show you attend. This way, you will be prepared if your exhibit is MIA or your hot new product malfunctions on the show floor. Here are four ways to lessen budget busters when you need a plan B.

1. Plan a presentation that does not require your product. In a pinch, have product literature that will "make do."
2. Make sure all graphic digital files are on disc so new graphics can be recreated quickly - and without designing new artwork.
3. Prepare an alternative exhibit configuration that consists of rental furniture and plants.
4. Locate alternative vendors in the show city for any last-minute exhibit needs. Identify some low-cost exhibit components you can make do with in a pinch.

## Selecting The Best Booth Location

Selecting the proper booth location is an important aspect of your trade show plan. Here are a few things to remember when selecting your space.

1. Traffic patterns. Study how traffic might move through the exhibit hall, and pick your location accordingly. Note on the floor plan where high traffic volumes are, for example, near entrances or exits, restrooms, break-out rooms and food areas. Also, don't forget potential traffic flow problem areas such as columns, empty booth spaces and loading docks.
2. Next to competition? Some exhibitors debate whether or not to put their booth space near or next to their competition at a trade show. One suggestion: Use a close location to your advantage. This is your chance to show what your product has over the competition. Your product may be less expensive, more reliable, require less production time, etc.
3. High identity. If you have an exhibit with hanging signs, bridges or tall canopies, choose a space without overhead impediments that might block your visibility. Also, make sure you abide by show regulations; it may vary from hall to hall. (Don't forget to get any height variance in writing from show management.)



## Ten Tips For Creating A Power Small Booth

Here's a roundup of proven tips to help you create a better small exhibit:

1. Use lighting. At most convention centers you can very affordably arrange to hang a spotlight from the ceiling. Otherwise, you can buy or rent a portable lighting system. According to some industry research, lighting can increase awareness of your exhibit by 30 percent to 50 percent.
2. Take a novel approach. Develop a theme for your booth. Leave the traditional approach to the big exhibitors that can rely on the size of their real estate to stand out.
3. Display the product or company name most recognized by attendees.
4. "Size" everything to fit the booth. (Unless you're purposely using large-scale props as a draw.) You wouldn't put a king- sized bed in your 9-by-12-foot guest bed room. Large information counters (borrowed from a larger booth) can dwarf your staffers.
5. Invest in a modular system that's easy to customize. Avoid draped tables. They can look cheap. A manufactured system gives the exhibit a more "finished" look.
6. Keep the exhibit simple and uncluttered. Choose only one or two products to display.
7. Create a strong visual impact by using fewer and larger graphics. Use words sparingly. Graphics copy that is too dense or too small will not be read.
8. Put graphics above the sightline. Graphics should start no lower than 36 inches on the backwall. Otherwise they will not be seen when people or products are standing in front of them.
9. Use bold, eye-catching colors that stand out from a distance. Avoid neutral colors that blend into the background.
10. Make your exhibit full-service, not "self-service." Spreading literature, give aways and product samples on a table where attendees can just grab them and walk away defeats the purpose of attending trade shows - which is to interact with visitors.

## The Hidden Costs Of Buying An Exhibit

When it's time to buy a new exhibit, there's a lot to consider. First on the list: How much will it cost? Realize that the answer to that question depends on more than the initial construction costs. You also have to consider transportation, setup/dismantle and drayage costs. To avoid unexpected budget-eaters, consider these costs from the beginning.

- Will the design require a forklift for setup, special electricity or additional crating?
- Is it heavier or larger than other options, thereby costing more to ship and/or store?
- Does it use an unusual material that will be costly to repair or replace?
- Does the exhibit house charge a high fee for drayage from the storage warehouse to truck?
- Will the exhibit need regular inspections, and if so, how much will that cost?

Use the answers to these questions to help you calculate the real cost of your new exhibit before making the purchase. It could save you a bundle in the long run.

## Too Much of a Good Thing?

Is your product marketing aimed at a very specific audience? Does your exhibit seem to overflow with curious tire-kickers who have no real interest in your product? Then try one of the following strategies to hook the right attendees and send the tire-kickers to another lot.

**Position demonstrations away from the aisles.** Clogged aisles full of onlookers can prevent serious customers from accessing your exhibit. While you still want to draw attention, your targeted attendees should be carefully qualified before they enter your exhibit for a demonstration.

**Raise the floor.** If show regulations allow, create a platform and raise the floor of your exhibit by a couple of inches. Then use a brightly colored carpet to attract attention and prevent falls. Casual strollers won't often take that extra step, but interested attendees will easily enter your colorful space.

**Use graphics to query prospects.** Try a teaser such as "Find out why ABC Co. beats the competition by 54 percent." With hooks such as these, serious buyers will stop to inquire while tire-kickers will stroll on by.

## Using Customer Testimonials

Experts will tell you to always try to bring something new to every show. But if a show doesn't coincide with a new product rollout, then what?

Andrew Corp. has taken an innovative approach to enhancing a standard product's presentation in the booth. Trade show manager Bobbi Rick asks customers to write testimonial letters, which she then posts next to the appropriate product display. Rick believes testimonials do a lot to raise a prospect's "comfort level" with a product. While she does coach the author (just a little) on what to write, the letter is printed on the customer's own letterhead.

## Using Merchandising Techniques In The Booth

When deciding which products to display at a show, take a few merchandising lessons from retailers. Consider that people shop at trade shows the same way they do in their everyday lives. Think of your exhibit as your company's "display window"; attendees are "window shoppers." What would you put out front to pull them into your "store"? Putting too much out front will only confuse shoppers. The products you display don't have to tell the whole story. Instead they imply, "There's more where that came from."

## Photography & Graphics

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### 10 Money-Saving Exhibit Graphics Tips

1. Use as little copy as possible.
2. Use standard vinyl colors and standard typefaces.
3. Use a large general image for multiple-division companies and then target specific markets with inexpensive strip graphics and auxiliary photos.
4. If you have copy that changes frequently, use removable vinyl that can be easily changed.
5. Work directly with the company that actually produces the graphics. (Buy photos from a photo lab, exhibit graphics from an exhibit company.)
6. Add copy to photographs in black and white instead of color.
7. Provide your vendor with clean art or a compatible disk.
8. Don't get so locked into an idea that you forget to be open to more cost-effective suggestions.
9. Order everything as early as possible.
10. Don't change your mind!

### Cutting Graphics Costs

To get the most out of your graphics dollar, address these two areas in the design process instead of the night before the show:

- Use a simple, easy-to-read font. Use common typefaces in case a graphic has to be recreated in a pinch. An unusual font that needs to be hand cut, for example, can drastically increase your costs. Also be aware of type size. Type should be one inch in height for every three feet attendees step back.
- Enhance with color. The right color can make all the difference. Design experts recommend dark-colored exhibits and light-colored graphics. Get several opinions on what is most easily read. You don't want to make costly changes on the show floor.

### Dirty Graphics

Trade show halls are incredibly dusty places. No matter how well you clean your graphics during set-up, the carpet layers will come in the night before the show and stir up enough dust that your graphics are covered the morning the show starts.

We've discovered that a Swiffer (a product from Proctor & Gamble) is wonderful to have around the booth for cleaning just about anything. It works especially well for graphics, particularly the ones up high that you would never be able to reach. If you buy two or three Swiffers, you can link the handle pieces together for a nice, long extension handle. When you're done, it breaks down into small pieces and can be hidden away till the next morning.

Swiffers can be found at just about any grocery or drugstore. A starter pack with the swivel sweeper head, handle pieces, and 8 refill cloths costs about \$15.

## Exhibit Photo Tips

Take lots of photos of your exhibit at every show. Photograph the entire exhibit from all angles, as well as every nook and cranny. This not only helps the setup crews from show to show, it also records any booth damage. Plus, it helps the marketing team remember how the booth looked at previous shows. As a bonus, it was very helpful when Allied Healthcare Products Inc. had three exhibit houses compete to build a new display. With the photos, the exhibit houses could clearly see the wide variety of Allied's products, which come in all shapes and sizes.

## Protecting Your Exhibit Graphics

Because they can be so easily damaged, it's critical that you protect your exhibit graphics for transport to and from shows. Your best bet is to assume your graphics will be abused, and to package them to withstand that abuse. Try these four tips:

- If possible, design your graphics to fit easily into your exhibit cases. Exhibit cases or crates are designed to withstand rough handling, which will benefit your graphics as well as your exhibit structure.
- Never force or over-pack graphics. If your cases are getting tight, get another graphics case.
- Make sure rigid graphics are well-secured within the package and have adequate padding. It's all too easy for rigid graphics to obtain nicks or dents if they're allowed to "move" in their storage container.
- Always insure. Heavily insured packages are hardly ever lost or damaged, since their value goes up in the eyes of their handlers.

## Management & Reporting

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### Calculating Your Potential Show Audience

There are 10,000 attendees at the show, but how many of them should you expect to reach with your exhibit? Here, from Exhibit Surveys Inc. is a quick formula for calculating this figure:

**Step 1:** Determine the percentage of high-interest attendees at the show. To do this, multiply the net attendance (excluding media, exhibit personnel, spouses and students) by the show's Audience Interest Factor. (AIF is the percentage of the total audience that visits two out of every 10 exhibits.) AIF varies by show. However, if you can't get an AIF figure from show management, use the all-industries average of 44 percent. For this example, we'll say the show's net attendance is 33,000 and the show's AIF is 44 percent. Thus, the number of high-interest attendees is 14,520 ( $33,000 \times .44 = 14,520$ ).

**Step 2:** Next calculate the size of your potential audience. To do this, multiply the number of high-interest attendees by the percentage of attendees who indicate a high level of interest in seeing your particular type of product. If data on product interests is not available from show management, use the all-industries average of 16 percent. Based on the previous calculations, if the number of high-interest attendees at a show is 14,520 and the interest factor for your product is 16 percent, then your potential audience is 2,323 ( $14,520 \times .16 = 2,323$ ).

### Checklists: The Ultimate Planning Tool

Checklists are the key to a smooth, sane planning process before shipping to or exhibiting at any show. When planning begins, put together a checklist that includes every "to do" item and the date it must be completed. Include a small box next to each item so you can check it off when it's done. This list will act as a reminder of what has yet to be done and what you can stop worrying about, whether it's the due date for the carpeting order form, getting a disk to the printer, shipping, whatever.

Another list that helps you stay organized is a master checklist for all items to be sent to the show. Start by assessing your supplies - tape, pens, scissors, stapler and staples, giveaway items, literature, etc. When it comes time to pack up boxes to ship, simply run through the list, mark off each item as you pack it, or put "N/A" next to those that don't apply. By sending everything your staffers could possibly need, you avoid putting them through the hassle of hunting down the item on the show floor (incurring outrageous fees) or spending unnecessary time going to a local store. The list acts as a safeguard, saves time and effort, and avoids inconvenience.

## Five Steps To A Great Trade Show

Trade shows can be a large investment, so make the most of your marketing dollars. Here are five tips to maximize your investment.

1. Build a checklist, and stick to it. Your checklist should include everything from the shipping information down to the materials ordered for your booth. The best bet is to appoint one person whose chief responsibility is to make sure everything is carried out to the last detail. Good communication between the trade show coordinator and the sales staff is key!
2. Promote your company. Prior to the show, send out promotional literature to your clients as well as prospects. Be sure to indicate your booth assignment. According to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research, about 25 percent of trade show visitors are searching out a specific company. Investigate any on-site advertising opportunities that might be offered such as having your literature displayed at or near the hall entrance.
3. Arrive early. Check out the exhibit and make sure everything you need is easily accessible. Test all computer equipment, lead management systems and any functioning marketing materials. Scout the exhibits next to yours, and make sure they're not doing anything that will affect your prospective clients.
4. Listen first, talk last. Don't begin by talking about your company to your prospects. Ask them about their company, and stay focused on the qualification process. This allows you to quickly qualify your audience and determine how much time to spend with them. You can even set a goal of how many people to talk to within an hour. Remember that the reason you are there is to meet as many potential clients as possible.
5. Always follow up. Immediately upon returning from the show, send follow-up correspondence to those potential clients. The most common error made by exhibitors is failure to follow up with their potential leads in a timely manner. A quick follow-up phone call allows you to touch base with your potential clients while you're still fresh in their minds.

## Making Your Survey A Success

Post-show surveys can be a highly effective method for evaluating your performance at a show. Industrial Systems used a post-show survey to measure the memorability of its product/marketing messages and to determine why visitors stopped at its booth at the Instrument Society of America show. The company received an impressive 54 percent response. Here are some tips for ensuring a high response rate.

- Keep the survey short. Industrial Systems limited the length of its survey to a page (one side only).
- Offer an incentive for completing the survey. Industrial Systems promised respondents a "surprise gift" (a mouse pad).
- Include a postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope as well as a fax number to make it easy to respond.

## No Time For Market Research?

Unless you work for a huge company with lots of resources, the only way to make market research work for you is to keep it manageable.

**Start small.** Take small projects and complete them successfully. Try to find out one or two specific things about your customers at each trade show. Or, learn everything you can about one industry segment your company wants to target.

**Focus.** Decide on a focus and stick with it. Brainstorm with the sales department to pick the focus.

**Hire students.** If you really can't find the time, call the marketing department of your local university. Many have students who'll do research to fulfill internship requirements.

## Using Mentors

They say the best education is experience. Unfortunately, this takes time, which is something a lot of exhibit managers don't have. Often exhibit managers struggle on their own to learn new tasks when they could be benefiting from the experience of others. Next time you're given an unfamiliar new task (such as budgeting for a multidivisional show or planning for an international show), try to find a peer mentor. Some places to look for mentors: industry shows, associations, even trade publications. Most people are more than willing to help (and often very flattered to be asked).

## Budgeting

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### When Is A New Exhibit Necessary?

How do you know when it's time to change your exhibit? A booth's age is not always the best indicator. All exhibits don't automatically "wear out" after five years. To assess your exhibit's current condition, ask the following questions:

**1. Is the booth still structurally sound and in good condition?** How your exhibit "wears" over the years depends on several factors:

- Frequency of use. Is your exhibit used at two or 20 shows per year?
- Mode of transportation. Do you usually ship your exhibit common carrier or van line? Van lines offer a more cushioned ride, which means less chance for damage in transit.
- Crated vs. uncrated. Crates provide extra protection during shipping and drayage.

**2. Is the booth cost-effective?** You need to assess how expensive your booth is to own. Is it heavy or difficult to set up? These costs can add up quickly.

**3. Does the booth meet your functional requirements?** If your company or product line has grown a lot in recent years, you might find you've outgrown your current booth. Examine your present and future space needs for the following:

- Demo areas.
- Product displays.
- Conference rooms.
- Storage space.

**4. Does the booth meet your current marketing objectives?** Does it say what you want it to say about your company and products?

**5. Does the booth reflect the correct image?** Has the image you want to project changed since the booth was built?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, you should examine whether it's time to get a new booth.

Another argument in favor of changing your booth is the "freshness" factor. By keeping the same exhibit for five years, you run the risk of attendees thinking, "Gee, I've seen this all before. They must not have anything new."

However the importance of staying fresh varies depending on the show. On average, 39 percent of a show's audience are first-time attendees; an additional 21 percent did not attend the show the previous year. So 60 percent of show attendees did not see your exhibit the year before. Check to see how turnover rates at your shows compare.

Finally, remember that changing your exhibit doesn't necessarily require a new booth. Refurbishments (such as new graphics, product displays, even carpeting) can make a big difference.

### Computing The Average Cost Of New Exhibits

For peninsula/island exhibits, the average cost is \$92 per square foot. For in-line (or linear) exhibits, the average cost is \$119 per square foot. Keep in mind, these averages do not include the cost of graphics. According to Exhibitor Magazine's 1996 Readers Survey, graphics account for 7 percent of the average exhibit budget.

Other noteworthy findings:

- Average new exhibit size - 1,372 square feet
- Average overall cost for a new exhibit - \$105,826
- Average number of bids solicited for a new exhibit - 2

These figures were calculated from 204 winning bid figures published in the "New Builds" column from January 1996 through June 1997.

## Cost Considerations When Buying An Exhibit

Your initial purchase price for a new exhibit is just the tip of the iceberg. During the purchasing process, you must also think about how your decision will affect shipping, drayage, setup and storage costs in the long run. Some factors to consider:

- Shipping and drayage costs are directly related to the weight of your exhibit. The more it weighs, the more it costs to move around. The physical size of your exhibit also affects shipping costs, but the main factor is weight.
- Setup costs are determined by the complexity of your exhibit equipment. Does your exhibit have a lot of small pieces and parts that must be assembled? Is the assembly particularly tedious? What kind of tools are required? Do you need equipment to place headers or overhead signage?
- Storage costs are determined by the size or bulk of your crates. If your exhibit packs down into more compact containers, it will take up less room and cost less to store.

## Cutting The Cost Of Your Exhibit

Looking for ways to trim costs on your next exhibit? Here are six money-saving tips to consider:

1. **Buy a modular exhibit.** The design costs are not necessarily lower, but the costs for shipping and installing/dismantling these exhibits are considerably less. One company reported saving \$10,000 to \$20,000 per show in installation fees.
2. **Consider renting carefully.** You may believe that it's cheaper to rent an exhibit than to buy one. If you're only doing one or two shows per year, that could be the case. But before making a decision, research what sort of renting options the show contractor or a local exhibit house is offering. Then weigh that price tag against the cost of shipping and installing your own exhibit. You may save thousands; or you may find out shipping your old exhibit isn't such a bad idea after all.
3. **Buy and recondition a used exhibit.** Used exhibit brokers as well as some exhibit houses offer a variety of used exhibits. Explore your options. The cost of buying used is typically 20 percent to 50 percent of the cost of building new. Remember to factor in the cost of any alterations the used structure will require.
4. **Go portable.** In a 10-foot booth space, a portable exhibit is often the best choice. These exhibits are usually inexpensive to buy and ship, and they can be set up by almost anyone on your staff (most halls allow it if it can be done in under 30 minutes), thus eliminating installation and dismantling charges.
5. **Design and build in-house.** OK, this isn't for everyone. But if you have a talented crew, you can do the work in-house and save yourself some possibly hefty design and construction fees.
6. **Have your exhibit prewired.** Prewiring permits easy electrical hook-ups, which saves on the \$50-plus per hour cost of electricians. Just make sure you are up to code.

## Cut Electrical/Plumbing Expenses

If your booth plan requires electrical service to several machines, don't order individual hook-ups for each piece of equipment. Instead, take a main power box to the show. This way you can order one main electrical drop and then take your own power cords to service equipment within your booth. You can even design the electrical box to handle different power requirements. Wired correctly, a box that accepts 208-volt, three-phase service can also power machines that require 208-volt single-phase or even 110-volt. Using this simple tip, electrical expenditures can be cut in half immediately! The same strategy can be used for air lines when they're needed for product hook-ups. Take an air manifold to the show, order one service drop, and hook individual machines up with your own air lines (ship them with the booth supplies).

## Cutting Electrical Charges

Here are some tips to reduce your exhibit's shocking electrical bills.

1. **Pre-wire as much of the exhibit as possible.** Anything you can just "plug and play" will save on labor charges.

2. **Avoid hard wiring.** Hard wiring is when an electrician has to connect actual wires to get your display or equipment to work-and the task takes union electricians 10 times longer than your lazy brother-in-law. Ideally, you shouldn't require any hard wiring to machinery or between sections of your display. Use pre-wired plugs whenever possible.
3. **Run under-the-carpet electrical before your freight arrives.** This eliminates the need to schedule a rigger to move your crates off the carpet while the electrician stands around admiring your potted mums at \$75 an hour.
4. **Never rent an extension cord or power strip.** Ever hear of Wal-Mart? They're much cheaper there.
5. **Carry a fully stocked gang box.** Believe me, stocking your entire electrical box will be less expensive than renting one T-plug at the convention center.

## Driving Down Transportation Costs

Transportation typically accounts for 10 percent of the average trade show budget - not exactly packing peanuts. Best advice: Don't assume that your transportation bill is as low as it can go. Carefully review your shipping bills to catch overcharges and identify problem cost areas. Here are three techniques that can put you in the driver's seat when it comes to controlling transportation costs:

- Keep accurate records of the actual weight and number of shipments. Your transportation charges are based on these figures. Make sure the charges are accurate. Know the weight of your shipping cases both full and empty, and specify the weight on your bill of lading.
- Know the number of laborers used and how many hours are spent each day loading and unloading your shipments. Keep records of when freight was received. Check those days against your invoice. Don't pay Saturday's overtime rate for items received Friday.
- Instead of shipping several small boxes, consolidate them all in one large box or shrink-wrap them all on one pallet. This not only saves money but ensures that all your small boxes arrive together. Send one shipment to the warehouse. Often there is a minimum charge for minimum weight - \$35-\$40 to handle a shipment whether it's 10 pounds or 200 pounds.

## Exhibiting On A Shoestring

For many "mom and pop" companies, the cost of simply traveling to and from an exhibition may be prohibitive. Here are some tips to use when you need to cut your costs to the bare bones. We don't recommend these for everybody, but in a pinch they can make the difference between exhibiting and staying home.

- Keep the trip short. If you can get a cheap flight (that doesn't require a Saturday stayover), fly in the night before the show opens and leave the day the show closes to save extra meal and lodging costs.
- Eliminate your booth. Instead of paying costly shipping for booth crates, use a 5-by-8-foot vinyl backdrop drape with eyehooks that adhere it to the back of the booth. Vinyl is durable, washable and costs only \$75. You might also consider a table-top or portable booth that you can transport to the show yourself.
- Send literature and giveaways to hotel. Instead of paying extra handlers to store and deliver your booth, ship your boxes to your hotel with a shipping label that reads, "Hold at front desk for (name)'s arrival." Hotels do not charge for this service. The boxes can be transported to your booth via a hand cart.
- Co-op your booth space. Reduce your costs if you are a manufacturer by asking if some local distributors will co-op the cost of the booth. (This works both ways. If you are a distributor, approach the manufacturer about a co-op.)
- Send a "fill-in" staffer. Instead of sending two or more employees to the show, send one with a spouse or friend to work the booth. This way you won't be shorthanded back at the office. Caveat: Make sure the "fill-in" is well-trained to work the booth. Also, spouses can share lodging, another money-saver. (If you pay the spouse's/friend's expenses, the IRS requires the person to be on your payroll. Minimum wage generally suffices.)

## Four Show (and budget) Savers

The best surprise is no surprise. Unfortunately, trade show planning is often full of unwanted surprises that will put the budget into overload. To avoid disaster, plan ahead for how to proceed if your exhibit and/or product disappears or is damaged. Consider these four cost-saving (and show-saving) options:

1. Plan a presentation that can be done with product literature, sans product.

2. Create backup signage and graphics for emergencies.
3. Prepare an alternative booth design that consists of rental furniture and/or plants.
4. Locate a source in the show city for last-minute exhibit rentals. Identify low-cost components you can "make do" with.

## Rental Rundown: What Your Rental Dollars Buy

Although renting exhibit properties can give your trade show program certain advantages compared to owning, it still costs money. Fortunately, there are some industry standards. Here is a breakdown.

\* The Basic Rental: The price tag on a basic rental runs between 25 percent and 30 percent of the exhibit purchase price. Basic pop-ups go for a little less than this; those who want extensive customization can expect to pay anywhere from a little to a lot more.

What do you get for that 25 percent? With a 20-by-20-foot island exhibit, expect professional laminate finishes, carpeting, quality counter space, a basic lighting system and basic architectural elements like a tower or trusswork.

\* Graphics: An important note: Graphics are not usually included in the rental price. The reason for this is simple. Exhibit companies cannot rent a logo for ABC Company to anyone else. This same principle holds true for any element of the booth that is too customized. So remember to budget additional funds for any booth graphics. A simple backlit logo might cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 depending on its size and how often it is used in the booth. Put that same logo on a 16-foot tower and make it rotate, and the price goes up.

\* The Extras: Want to spend more? "No problem," says Rajiv Kapur, president of Configurations, an exhibit service company. If you want special lighting effects (gobos, fiber optics, etc.), expect to pay for them. Customized architectural elements over and above the average tower will also add to your cost. more for it in order to meet our expenses," says Kapur. essentially it isn't. However, exhibit houses will ask for a damage deposit each time you rent. The cost: usually equal to the amount of the exhibit rental price. Return a booth with anything but "normal wear and tear," and you will lose at least some of your deposit. you will end up paying for shipping, drayage and I&D. Most exhibit rental companies will take care of these tasks for you - for a price. Other companies will expect you to handle the logistics yourself. house offering you what seems to be an unbelievable deal, don't believe it. Check the contract to find out who is paying for what.

\* Storage: This one is definitely not your concern. The exhibit house picks up everything.

## Save on Decorator Labor

If you apply graphics with self-stick hook-and-loop fastener, always pre-apply it to the back of your graphics before shipping them to the show site. Then decorators won't have to apply it while they're on your clock. Simply apply the loop side of the fastener to your graphic. Then adhere the hook side, leaving the protective adhesive strip in place. At show site, your set-up will be much quicker and cheaper. A final note: Always apply the soft, "loop" side of the fastener closest to your graphic. This way graphics won't get damaged if they are accidentally stacked together during tear down.

## Savings Starters

Do you need to cut corners with your next exhibit strategy? Start with literature and giveaways. According to Exhibit Surveys Inc.'s 1999 survey of best-remembered exhibits, out of the eight most-remembered aspects of an exhibit presence, literature and giveaways rank seventh and eighth respectively.

Consider the tons of expensive literature that line the trade show trash cans. Then ask yourself if that key chain, coffee mug or product brochure really secured additional leads.

If the answer is yes, then stick with them. But if the answer is no, then look to literature and giveaways as your first budgetary cuts.

## Show Floor Savings

Good exhibit managers are always scrutinizing their budgets. Remember that even small adjustments can mean big savings in the big picture. Here are some cost-cutting tips:

- **Make a list.** This may sound obvious, but careful use of a good checklist can eliminate the need for last-minute at-show purchases (such as tape, cleaning supplies, etc.) that have a price mark-up.



- **Can the trash can rental.** Buy your own trash cans for about \$3 instead of paying as much as \$15 to rent them at each show. Plus, when preparing your show shipment, they are a great place to pack office supplies and lead forms.
- **Carry power.** Buy extension cords and power strips prior to the show. Extension cords cost about \$5 at a discount store. You'll spend about \$20 to rent one at the show. Make sure the cords are UL-approved and will carry a 20-amp load.
- **Vacuum up savings.** If your exhibit is small, bring your own mini-vacuum and forget the \$20 daily fee to hire the service.
- **Copy at home.** Before you leave, make any photo copies you might need instead of paying inflated business office prices.
- **Bring mail supplies.** If you'll be sending your lead forms back to the office from show site, take FedEx envelopes and shipping forms pre-printed with your account number. That way, you'll be able to drop it off in the FedEx box with no additional charges incurred.

## Ten Tips To Save On Presentation Costs

Planning a major presentation for your exhibit can be an expensive proposition. At least that is the common perception. But there are ways to keep costs down without sacrificing the quality of the finished product. Here are 10 tips to keep production costs from jumping a runaway train.

1. Plan far enough in advance to avoid rush charges - at least three months; six months is ideal.
2. Establish a firm budget and itemize what you expect to receive. Submit to your vendors a written document, which clearly communicates your objectives, budget and what you expect to receive from them.
3. Have your vendors submit a written contract that spells out all deliverables. Be aware of any cancellation clause.
4. Give accurate, complete and important input to ensure the first draft of the script is 90 percent correct.
5. Make sure all decision-makers are a part of the input process from the start.
6. Meet all deadlines. Period.
7. Attend editing sessions to avoid costly mistakes, and do not change input in the middle of the production process.
8. Amortize costs over several projects. Reuse as much of your existing graphics, videos and ads as possible. Make your production team aware of associated graphics, videos and ads before they start the creative process.
9. Map out a strategy for the year and include events, meetings, trade shows, road shows, laptop presentations and press conferences. See where presentation materials can be re-used.
10. Work with established vendors. Check references. And stick with the same company - this eliminates the time needed to understand your company, culture, products and customers.

## The One-Step Solution To Cutting Warehousing Costs

Put your old exhibit on the market. Simple as that. Here's How

Pack rats are obvious critters. Stacks of old magazines crowd the new stuff off our bookshelves; worn sweatshirts spill out of our closets. We're graduates from the school of "you never know - I might need/want/wear that again someday."

Pack-rat-edness among exhibit managers is especially hazardous, since exhibit storage space comes at a premium higher than a bookshelf or a dresser drawer. You're paying by the cubic foot to warehouse that old exhibit, and it hasn't seen daylight since The Big Show '89.

Why not sell it? There is a growing market for used exhibits - plenty of up-and-coming exhibitors want the look without the price. You'll bring in some revenue as well as get rid of those nasty storage fees.

To make the selling process easier for you as well as your prospective buyer, keep the following guidelines handy when prepping your exhibit for the market.

### Papers, please

Proper documentation is the key to selling an exhibit. Pull together all records you have for the exhibit and its operation. Include:

- Blueprints and setup drawings. These are essential - without them, the new owner won't be able to set up the purchase. Be certain the blueprints represent any structural changes you've made since the original build. "If the booth reconfigures, have those alternative floor plans available," adds Pat Friedlander, advertising manager, Giltspur Inc.

- An itemized inventory and crate packing list. An itemized inventory calls out every part of your exhibit - from panels to pedestals. The packing lists explain how all these parts fit into their respective crates. "Indicate how many crates the exhibit takes, which components each crate holds, and the size and weight of each crate when empty and when loaded," says Jim Santoro, co-owner, SecondLife Exhibits Inc.
- I&D and service bills. Include copies of invoices for electrical, drayage, labor and so on. "It's just like buying a house, when the buyer wants detailed information about taxes, maintenance and such," says Friedlander. And be honest about the setup challenges. "If you need special equipment like a cherry picker to put up (the exhibit), it's important to let the buyer know," advises Friedlander.
- Photos. These are helpful for prospective buyers who may not be able to visualize the exhibit from a description or blueprint. Jeff Stewart, chief financial officer at Denley Instruments, went beyond photos when selling his exhibit. "We put together color samples of the panel fabric, the counter top laminate and the carpet," he says. "We also pulled together a list of the color reference numbers (from the original manufacturer) so it would be easy for the buyer to match the colors."

Also determine if you are willing to split up the exhibit properties. "If you can sell 85 percent of an exhibit in one swoop and be left with a few counters, do it," advises Jim Santoro. "Be willing to split it up, but on a limited basis." For example, don't sell your main tower as a single unit. You'll never clear out the remaining pieces.

Certain exhibits, such as systems, lend themselves to being sold in parts. "A client may send us a 10-by-40-foot that can clearly be two 20-foot exhibits," says Jim Santoro. These smaller configurations may even be more salable than the full 40 feet.

### Don't fix that chip

"It's foolish to make any repairs," advises Jim Santoro. "Buyers know they're buying as-is. They don't expect the exhibits to be in perfect condition." Unlike selling a house, when you would recoup the cost of a coat of paint that increases the house's "curb appeal," cosmetic changes don't increase the value of your exhibit.

On the other hand, storage conditions can have an impact on your exhibit's appearance and quality. "An exhibit that was in perfect condition when it was retired may be mildewed or warped from being stored in a damp warehouse," Jim Santoro explains. In this case, be aware that you'll have to make some concessions in your asking price so the buyer can afford to have the structural damage repaired.

And about that carpet, all sliced-up for electrical: It probably won't sell along with the exhibit. "Used carpet doesn't have any value," says Zackari Santoro, co-owner, SecondLife Exhibits Inc. "The best way to get rid of it is to offer it to your co-workers. Someone is bound to have a rec room that needs new carpet or a kid in college for whom it will be perfect."

### Price check

Setting a price for your used exhibit is at best a guessing game. Negotiating is the rule. "Don't look at it as a profit center," says Friedlander. "Just set a price you think you'd be happy with. Then be prepared to come down."

If you're selling a system exhibit, the original manufacturer or sales rep may not help you determine the fair market value of the exhibit. "We tried to talk to the original vendor, but he's more interested in selling new product," says Stewart. "He wasn't very accommodating in helping us set a price (for our used exhibit)."

One pricing guideline recommended by SecondLife Exhibits is to ask about 30 percent of the original cost. This allows the buyer to make alterations, add new logos, buy new fixtures and carpet, and still spend less than 50 percent of the original bill. "If you go above 50 percent of the original cost, the exhibit isn't as much of a bargain anymore," warns Jim Santoro.

A second approach - if you haven't fully depreciated the original value of the exhibit - is to try to recoup the remainder, as tracked by your accounting department. In either case, "you have to be very flexible," Stewart advises. "You might only have one chance at a buyer."

Finally, before gleefully shipping off your crates to a broker or the new owner, look carefully through every crate. Why? There might be something in those crates that you really should not be tossing. "We've received crates full of literature, product samples and giveaways," says Zackari Santoro. So, pack rats, here's one case where a bad habit definitely pays off.

## Watch Vendors' Travel Costs

You're probably skilled at holding down your own travel expenses, but what about those of your vendors? If actors, spokesmodels or installation and dismantle crews go with you to shows you could be paying as much as a 30 percent markup on their travel costs.

Rather than simply accepting the charges they turn in, investigate. If you're being gouged, tell the vendors you'll handle their travel arrangements. Then apply reasonable standards of thrift.

## Where To Cut Your Trade Show Budget In A Pinch

Here are three areas to examine first when you need to make budget cuts.

**1. Exhibit space size.** At an average 35 percent of total costs, exhibit space costs eat up a big chunk of any company's trade show budget. Thus, if you reduce space size, you also reduce the budget. Better yet, this has a ripple effect, as costs for shipping, installation and dismantle, and number of staffers needed in the booth decline. However, realize that taking a smaller space will likely reduce your exhibit's memorability, according to studies by Exhibit Surveys Inc. And you simply may not reach as many people on the show floor. One other caution: Check with show management to be sure you won't be penalized for changing your space size (i.e., lose a portion of your space deposit). Still, reduced space is one way to maintain a presence while still cutting the budget.

**2. Exhibit structure.** At 16 percent, exhibit and graphics creation takes up another large chunk of the budget. Obviously, you can save by sticking with an old exhibit instead of building new. Renting at the show instead of shipping the booth is another potentially cost-saving option. You might also try using less structure by leaving behind a hanging sign or a larger counter. This will save on shipping and installation/dismantle costs.

**3. Show schedule.** Maybe there are one or two shows on your schedule that are optional. Eliminating even one show has an exponential effect on your budget. By canceling a show, you also cancel all the ancillary costs, such as shipping, installation/dismantle, hotel rooms, travel and other personnel costs. One caution: Cancellation may not be a cost-effective option if you've already made a nonrefundable payment on space.

## Promotion

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### Alternative To Hand-Addressed Envelopes

So you don't have the bodies - or the budget - to hand-address your pre-show mailer labels? Here's an attractive alternative: Use a script-style font and print the names on a clear label. This friendly format can encourage recipients to open the envelope. And your hand won't feel like it got caught in a vice.

### Bulk Mail Discounts

Interested in saving money on pre-show mailing postage? Ask your postal representative about discount opportunities. One basic type: automation discounts on bulk mailings. You are likely to receive a price break by making sure your mailing has ZIP+4 addresses or by prebarcoding your mailings. If you have an in-house mailing list, it may be worth the money to hire a temp to come in and update your mailing list with the ZIP+4 numbers.

### Curiously Popular News Release

JFAX Communications, an Internet messaging company, devised a clever way to get its one-page news release noticed by the press. While most companies were using slick press kits, this company stapled a little packet of Altoids to each release. The otherwise nondescript releases were wildly popular, and the new company achieved its goal of getting noticed by the press.

## Eight Tips For Creating Low-Cost Promotions

Stumped on how to come up with a low-cost booth promotion? Here are eight basic tips that can get you thinking about how to develop low-cost traffic stoppers.

1. Low-cost attractions are appropriate for all types of exhibitors, from small booth, first-timers to larger, experienced exhibitors.

2. Good low-cost attractions usually require one or more of the following: creativity, risk, experience, adaptation and fun.
3. When creating effective low-cost attractions, it is acceptable to adapt other exhibitors' ideas to your own show situation.
4. Some of the best attractions are virtually free.
5. Good attractions are often timely in nature and take advantage of interests developed outside the trade show area.
6. In creating a good low-cost attraction, it is more important to strive to be good rather than to hold out for perfection.
7. The best attractions are often theme-related.
8. The best ideas are often implemented easily using people inside your company.

## Eliminate Giveaway Guesswork

1. Make qualification for giveaways selective.
2. Keep the giveaways out of sight (unless you're using them to increase name awareness).
3. Use an entry form (lead card completion) to increase selectivity.
4. Find an item that has a natural link to your company's message.
5. Consider unique items over "copycat" giveaways to increase your company's memorability.
6. Remember that perishable items don't last as long - and neither do the impressions they make.

## Lighten Your Literature Expenses

Literature is an important component in trade show marketing. If exhibit visitors want information about your product or service, literature is a good, fast way to provide it. However, brochures often are thrown away by attendees (and sometimes even exhibitors!) as soon as a show is over. With that in mind, here are some tips for saving money on brochure expenses.

- Ship your literature with the exhibit. This prevents you from incurring additional shipping/drayage charges.
- Monitor brochure usage. Instead of putting stacks of brochures, order forms, etc., on a table, qualify the attendee and then give him a handout to take home. Don't just hand out literature to anyone who happens within a few feet of your exhibit.
- Send brochures after the show. Instead of hauling around heavy, expensive boxes of literature, gather your attendees' contact information and send literature to them after the show. This gives you a chance to remind them about your product/service.
- Avoid four-color literature. Because most trade show handout material is thrown away, don't spend money on fancy, four-color literature. Instead, give attendees less expensive materials at the show and send four-color materials later.
- Use literature as a disengaging tool. Give out informational materials after you've talked with a passerby.

## Low-Cost Literature

Most literature (and thus exhibit program dollars) ends up on hotel night stands or the bottoms of trash barrels. The following cost-cutting strategies can help you distribute your printed word without tossing your dollars to the wind.

- Gather contact information. Take down attendees' names and addresses and send them literature after the show. Not only is the literature more likely to be read when it arrives, but you'll create a second contact and secure valuable information for future mailings.
- Create a show-specific brochure. If you simply can't resist passing out something, prepare a low-cost brochure using just one or two colors. Then offer more information or additional brochures if the attendee makes a second, post-show contact.
- Restrict quantities. Bring only enough copies for just over 5 percent of the targeted audience. This forces staffers to carefully qualify all attendees with one-on-one conversations before distributing product literature.
- Place racks carefully. Try to avoid literature racks completely. But if you must use a rack, place it in the middle of the exhibit rather than on the aisle. "Stroll and grab" attendees won't pilfer your stash, and serious prospects will need to venture into your exhibit (and closer to a salesperson) to obtain one.

## Make The Most Of Product Literature

Should you or shouldn't you hand out literature in your booth? The answer: yes and no. Yes, you should have literature available, but don't put it out on the aisle. Attendees will just grab a brochure and walk away without talking to a booth staffer. (Also, you should know that about 65 percent to 80 percent of all literature gathered at a show is thrown away before attendees leave for home.)

To save money and cut down on the amount of literature you must send to shows, qualify attendees before you hand out literature. Another option: Create binders of product literature that stay in the booth, where attendees can review them for product specifications and other relevant information.

## Reinventing The Giveaway

No budget for a giveaway at your next show? Don't give up just yet. Check the storeroom for any "leftovers" from previous promotions. Then find a way to adapt those items to your needs. For example, Amdahl had piles of opera glasses from a previous promotion. The glasses fit the show theme - "The Search is Over" - but unfortunately featured an imprint from the previous promotion. To remedy that, the imprint was covered with a sticker featuring the current campaign. Voila! Instant giveaway, at a savings of several thousand dollars.

## Seven Deadly Sins Of Pre-Show Mail Campaigns

Face it: There's no end to the ways you can mess up a direct mail campaign. Most of us are familiar with the mistakes that lead to certain direct-mail death: don't ask for any action, mail the item too late, don't use benefits-oriented copy, or (heaven forbid!) don't send anything at all.

Pre-show direct mailers are a particularly demanding breed of the direct mail species. As such, there's even more room for error. Here are seven common pre-show direct mailer errors identified by Lorraine Denham, executive vice president, Unipro Marketing Services. Watch out for them in your planning.

1. Wrongful assumptions. Don't assume that people know all about your company or its products. Keep your copy to one message, and keep that message simple. You can educate them on the other levels of your company and products once they are in the booth.
2. Mailer overboard. Giant type, multiple exclamation points, a dozen vibrant colors - ouch! Remember that pre-show mailers set the tone and spirit of your booth. You might discourage attendees from visiting your booth if your mailer is too loud.
3. Error of excess. Often, a pre-show mailer ends up looking like a product catalog, filled with specs and details. "You don't have to tell them how your product works," Denham says. "Just get them to see the benefit of coming to visit you."
4. It's the message, stupid. Sometimes, pre-show mail creators are so caught up in the "creative" side of things that they forget what they are supposed to accomplish. The goal is bring people to the booth, not convince them this is the cutest mailer in the history of exhibiting.
5. "We're the greatest." The pre-show mailer is not the place to laud your company's latest accomplishments. Instead, you need to tell attendees why they should visit your booth. Think about how your product/service benefits them, and let that drive the message.
6. Know the show limitations. If show management will be sending the mailer for you, be sure to check their guidelines up front. One company planned to ship its comic book style mailer in clear-coated plastic envelopes. They found out too late that show management's mail house couldn't process the materials.
7. Too many hoops. Some mailers simply ask for too much action. "Bring the mailer to the front desk, have it stamped, fill out a form, visit three product stations-" Make it easy for your recipient. Give them one simple step, such as interfacing with a sales representative or viewing a presentation, to redeem the mailer.

## Seven Tips For Increasing Effectiveness Of Pre-Show Mailers

Done right, direct mail can be a powerful promotion that builds booth traffic, generates sales leads and creates awareness. Here are seven proven tips for improving your response with pre-show direct mail.

1. Don't underestimate the importance of the list. Even the most brilliant pre-show mailer will flop if sent to the wrong list. Often, the best source for names is your own internal database. Send your pre-show mailer to prospects and customers within a 100-mile radius of the exhibit hall, since most shows have a strong regional draw. Another source for names might be a list of people who have responded to ads for your products within the last six months but haven't made a purchase yet.
2. Make sure to include a call to action. Enclose a response card in your mailer. Instruct recipients to bring the card to your booth to receive a small gift. (Remember to print your booth number on the card in case they don't bring the whole mailer to the show.)
3. Get personal. The more personal the mailer, the greater response you'll receive. Always use an individual's name on the envelope and enclosed letter. Another technique is for salespeople to add a brief handwritten note at the bottom of the letter. This adds a personal touch to the communication.

4. Create a sense of urgency. A short "teaser" message on the outer envelope can prompt the recipient to open the mailer right away (for example, "Urgent: Open by Nov. 15"). If you're asking the recipient to RSVP, you may add a note at the close of the invitation that reads, "Hurry. Attendance is limited. Make your reservation today."
5. Give them a choice. Some of the people you invite to your booth will be unable to attend the show, but they still may have a genuine interest in your products. Offer to send them a brochure or a newsletter, or call them in person to tell them what they missed. One exhibitor even offered to send a videotape of his exhibit to no-shows. Always include a postage-paid business-reply postcard or envelope so recipients can respond to your offer.
6. Emphasize exclusivity. If you're introducing a new product or service at the show, play this up in your mailing. Highlight the importance of the new offering and the fact that the reader is having the exclusive opportunity to see it first.
7. Include a VIP pass. It's a good idea to include an official show pass or registration form in your mailer. Having a show pass gives the prospect the comfort of knowing that he has the necessary paperwork to get into the exhibit hall. Print your company name and booth number on the show pass, so the recipient will know which booth to visit and thank for the "perk."

## Seven Ways To Slash Pre-Show Mailer Costs

Pre-show mailers can be a good way to draw attention to your exhibit. But they can also be a budget buster to produce. Here are seven ways to keep mailer production costs down.

1. Mind the size limits. Keep the entire, unfolded mailer within an 11-by-17-inch format. That's the largest of the standard film sizes that can be processed by most film houses. It is also the largest size of film that can be printed on a small press. If you go larger, you will pay more for both creating the film and printing the mailer.
2. Go two-color. Two-color mailers usually feature one color, such as red, along with black for the text. It's 25 percent cheaper than four-color because it uses two pieces of film (instead of four) and requires only a two-color press. Of course, you'll probably lose some impact by going two-color instead of four-color. But you can jazz things up a bit by shading the colors and using duotones. Ask your graphic designer for ideas.
3. Go four-color on the cheap. Some people try to save money by using two-color printing on the mailer's interior and four-color printing on the exterior. But if you're going to use any four-color graphics, you might be able to make the entire piece four-color without blowing the budget. Here's how. When you have the film made, place both the front and back pieces on the same piece of film. Then place marks where the printer can cut the mailer. You save money by using one piece of film and one printing press. (If you had both two-color and four-color graphics on your mailer, you would need to use two different presses to print the piece.)
4. Use existing artwork. When an outside graphic designer creates a new image for you, it may cost around \$50 an hour and take 10 hours or more to create. If you provide the designer with existing artwork of, say, the company logo, it can be scanned in. Better yet, give them a digitized file with the artwork. It will save both time and money.
5. Purchase "photo disks." Photo disks contain about 400 "stock" images that can be used for your mailers. You purchase all usage rights for the images; the cost runs about \$250 for each disk. (Look for offers on such graphics disks in the back of magazines like Mac User and Mac World.) An alternative is to go to a stock photo house and purchase a picture - but that will run you about \$500 for one image.
6. Create one mailer for multiple shows. One company created a run of about 50,000 mailers for use at several upcoming shows. During the initial printing, a space was left open on the mailer where specific show information (show name/dates, booth number, booth map, etc.) could later be added for each event. The show information was printed in separate, one-color printing runs where only black was used for the text, making it a less-expensive venture.
7. Choose only one paper stock. If you're creating a multipage mailer or brochure, use the same paper stock for both the cover and interior pages. In most cases, using even one heavy paper stock will be cheaper than a combination of light and heavy stocks.

## The Personal Touch

Small exhibitors can face a high hurdle when it comes to attracting show visitors. Using the "personal touch" can help overcome that hurdle. One good example comes from Larry Strauss at the Saratoga Inn Resort. Prior to one show, Strauss sent out a pre-show mailer and made phone calls to key prospects. Post-show follow-up included two handwritten postcards along with another phone call. These promotional techniques gave the Saratoga Inn Resort a bigger presence than its 10-by-10-foot space might have allowed.

## Three Low-Cost Exhibit Marketing Ideas

We've all heard the bad news about what it costs to exhibit at shows. (Estimate: \$7,000 for a 10-foot portable!) The good news is that there are also many inexpensive ways for small companies to promote themselves at shows. Here are three ideas:

1. Name awareness. Many people buy products simply because they're familiar with the name. To boost your name awareness at shows, repeat your name whenever and wherever you can. Add it to graphics, literature, bags, pre-show mailers, show daily advertising, hotel door drops.
2. Customer testimonials. Word-of-mouth is the best and cheapest form of advertising. How can you get customers to "talk up" your company? Ask them. They may already be attending the show, so you can avoid paying travel costs. Solicit customers' help to staff the booth, participate in a presentation, provide a "letter of recommendation" for graphics or a pre-show mailer.
3. Mailing lists. Collect demographic information from as many prospects as possible at shows. Asking booth visitors to fill out lead forms doesn't cost you anything. After the show, add their information to your database for follow-up and future promotions. Your marketing efforts are only as good as your database. So, keep it current. Even if someone is a current customer, it doesn't hurt to run his/her badge through your lead retrieval system to check against your database.

## Two Alternatives To Pre-Show Mailers

Tired of pre-show mailers? Looking for something new? Try one of these two promotional techniques:

1. Under-the-door flyers. Print up a flyer that entices show attendees to your booth (use show specials, promotional giveaways, live demos etc.). Approach the official show hotels to distribute these flyers under the doors of those hotel guests who are show attendees. Try to time these flyers to hit their rooms between midnight and 6 a.m. the day the show opens, so attendees get it right before they enter the show. Tip: Consider formatting your flyer as a newsletter. If attendees confuse it with a show daily, you've gained an additional reason they might read it. cost: Usually between 50 cents and \$1 per room, plus the cost of printing the flyers.
2. In-room videos. If your organization has its own video that describes you and your product/service, approach the official show hotels to screen your video on their in-house conference channel. If possible, add a tag line with your booth number at the end of the video (sometimes this can also be added to run at the bottom of the screen throughout). Tip: Most of us tend to be channel surfers, so keep that video short! Three minutes is ideal; six minutes maximum. cost: Some hotels have set prices for this service (as much as \$500 per day), some do not. Don your best negotiating cap if you're budget-conscious, and try for a rate you can afford.

For both of these promotion methods, you need to get permission from show management to approach the official show hotel/s. Show management usually requests to see a copy of any materials first before authorizing your arrangements with the hotels. Remember to add time to your planning schedule for this approval time.

## Shipping

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### Call Ahead With Special Shipping Needs

When it comes to shipping your exhibit, be aware of "busy" times your carrier may be facing. For example, the week after Memorial Day is one of the busiest household moving times of the year. During these busy times, give your carrier advance notice of your special shipping needs. Doing so will prevent you from paying last-minute premium prices. Encad once needed 400 moving pads for an exhibit shipment during the week after Memorial Day, and the advance notice saved them both money and a lot of worry.

### Cutting Costs On The Big Move

Moving large items can be a budget buster. The single biggest cost saver is planning ahead. If you have to move a 40,000-pound container from Dallas to Berlin in three days, it's going to be very expensive. If you have six weeks to move that same container, it's not nearly as costly.

In general, as the speed of the shipping mode increases, so does the price. If you've got time to ship things by rail, it will be cheaper than by truck. In turn, trucks are much less expensive than aircraft. But remember, even in a pinch, airlines are not designed to move bulk freight.

Following are some other budget-friendly factors to consider when moving large items:

- Work with a company that handles freight regularly. Usually exhibit houses move enough freight that they have better deals with carriers than a single user would have. They also have the contacts necessary to coordinate tricky logistics for large items.

- Always get at least three quotes on every move. There can be a 30-percent difference in pricing on the same move by the same class of carrier.
- When going by truck during the summer months, avoid end-of-month shipments. Typically that is when the highest concentrations of household moves occur. Availability of trucks during that time is limited.

## Interviewing Carriers

Selecting the right carrier is a time-intensive process. Start with a short-list of four or five carriers. To decide if a company fits your needs, ask these questions:

1. How will you communicate with me, your drivers and your dispatchers? Look for a combination of written and verbal communications. Written communication provides a permanent record, but verbal communication is essential for last-minute changes.
2. Does your company transport to all major convention centers in the United States and Canada?
3. How many people will I have to talk to in getting the job done? Ideally, you want one main contact and one back-up contact you can reach quickly.
4. How many people can I talk with? The answer will indicate how accessible management is in an emergency or when your contact is unavailable.
5. Is there a carrier agent in my show city for any local work I might need?
6. Do you supply written confirmation of orders? This is for your own records.
7. Can I see a client reference list?
8. Who is your biggest competitor? What do they do differently and why? These questions will help you assess the company's priorities.
9. Can the company deliver materials to either the show site or the advance warehouse, depending on the circumstances? If you're routing materials from show to show, you'll want the option of sending them to the advance receiving warehouse.
10. What is your driver's standard operating procedure for move-out? Does the driver check in with the client at the close of the show or not until the next day? The preferred procedure is for the driver to check in with you immediately after the show.
11. When the show closes, what is expected of me? What arrangements will you be responsible for? These questions clarify your exact role during move-out.
12. What are the move-in/move-out specifications at Chicago's McCormick Place? The answer will indicate the carrier's familiarity with the facility. (You don't have to use McCormick Place as the example. Choose whatever convention center you want.)
13. If my equipment arrives two days before the show opens and half of it doesn't work, how will you get me new equipment on time? Use your own "horror story" example to find out how the company would handle it.
14. Can you arrange air freight?
15. How are costs determined?
16. In addition to the transport costs, what will I be charged for?
17. Can you handle shipments to Canada or Mexico if necessary?
18. Can I reach your company 24 hours a day?
19. Who assumes responsibility if the carrier misses the target move-in date?
20. Are your rates different from your competition's? Why or why not?
21. What types of insurance do you offer?
22. Will there be a supervisor on the floor during move-in/move-out? Supervisors make the process flow more smoothly.
23. Will my shipment be transloaded in transport? If so, how does the company ensure my exhibit isn't lost or damaged in the process?
24. Will the driver present weight tickets for the drayage contractor? These tickets verify actual weight upon which charges are based - as opposed to volume weight, which is generally higher.
25. What percentage of your sales volume comes from trade show shipments? Ideally, your rep will have 100 percent of sales from trade shows. Remember, you are assessing the rep's level of experience with trade show shipments.

## Know Your Crate's Fate

Have you ever tried to find a lost crate among a sea of crates that look just like yours? Make recognizing your crates easier by painting them with wild colors so they'll stand out from the rest.

That way, the next time one of your crates gets delivered to the wrong space, you'll be able to spot it quickly as you search the show floor. The idea also helps if delivery is delayed after the show. You won't have any trouble describing to the general contractor what your tiger-striped cargo looks like.



## Make The Crates Without Breaking The Budget

You can save anywhere from a few hundred dollars to more than \$2,000 when designing the crates for a new exhibit. How? By taking all planned configurations into account before putting hammer to nail. Strategic planning can save you the hassle and expense of retrofitting your crates after the fact. For example, if you know up front that you occasionally plan to use pieces of your new 40-foot exhibit as a 10-foot booth, make sure that two of the crates are designed and jugged to hold all the components for the 10-foot configuration. It can be expensive (at \$40 to \$60 per hour) to retrofit crates later, and building two new crates just for the 10-foot arrangement could cost \$2,000.

## Outsmart Thieves With Sneaky Labels

Theft happens. Even with your guard up and your instincts on red alert, there are times when your products and exhibit materials are out of your sight.

Thieves head straight for the crates and boxes marked "product" or "electronics." Outsmart them by mislabeling your literature as products and your high-tech equipment as literature.

Even if your exhibit stash is pilfered, you'll end up with the pricey stuff, and the thieves will walk away with 20,000 copies of "Why Acme is the Smart Choice."

## Real-Time Shipping Quotes

Because transportation costs consume an average of nine percent of a trade show budget, it's important to shop around for the best price. The National Transportation Exchange, a business-to-business e-commerce Web site, offers a neutral marketplace for buyers and sellers of ground transportation at [www.nte.net](http://www.nte.net). To obtain real-time quotes, you need to enter basic shipping information, such as user's zip code, destination zip code and number of pallets. Or you can be more specific and give the number of floor feet of the shipment, net weight and best quoted price. The service will instantly price compare and either offer less expensive quotes or let you know if you already have the best shipping price.

## Save On Shipping

One of the best ways to cut down on shipping costs is to negotiate with your shipper. Frank Schaeffer Publications, which produces children's books, videos and educational materials, negotiated a 55-percent discount with its shipper. Here's how.

**Negotiation** - Because the company is a manufacturer, it constantly ships out products. The company has a warehouse in Memphis, and that office negotiates the shipping price to begin with. Even though the exhibit program is run out of a California office, the company is able to negotiate with the shipper to include exhibit program shipments with its overall shipping contract.

**Consolidation** - Shipping savings also were realized by consolidating shipments into large packages that can be transported by the show carrier. If you send a lot of little items via overnight freight, you will pay a premium for express shipping and get dinged by drayage costs. Schaeffer has paid up to \$25 per box for workers at the convention hall to take shipments off the truck and deliver it to the booth. With a lot of small boxes, that drayage expense can add up to more than it costs to send the shipment across the country.

When Schaeffer comes down to the wire on a shipment for a particular event, it still uses its regular carrier, which offers special exhibitor services. It costs full price but the carrier guarantees the shipment will arrive in three days. And, to keep Schaeffer as a long-term client, the carrier will go the extra mile to make sure the shipment arrives safely.

## Save Through Consolidated Shipments

Sure, you look for the best price possible for shipping your exhibit and your products to trade shows. But you can blow those savings by sending several smaller boxes via UPS or FedEx. Why? Because most convention centers have a minimum drayage weight of 500 pounds. They'll charge the drayage fee for a 500-pound package even if your box weighs only 100 pounds.

A good alternative is to consolidate your 100-pound packages by shrink-wrapping them onto a pallet. For the best price, send them along with the rest of your show freight. Bonus: All of your show materials are in one place, and you don't have to track the whereabouts of a half-dozen different shipments.

## Six Tips For Negotiating Better Shipping Rates

Transportation costs eat up 11.2 percent of an average exhibitor's budget, according to Exhibitor magazine's 1994 Readers Survey. To lessen the blow, here are six shipping tips.

1. "Buy" the truck. With van lines and common carriers, see if it's cheaper to pay for a full truckload shipment, even if your freight won't fill the truck. Say your cargo only fills one-third of a van line trailer (1,300 cubic feet). On a short trip, like Los Angeles to Las Vegas (272 miles), it would be cheaper to pay a full truckload rate (\$1,434) than the chargeable weight (\$1,497). (In most cases, your carrier will automatically compute the lowest cost for you.)
2. If you are sending a heavy shipment by common carrier but it doesn't fill a full-sized trailer, see about using a "pup" trailer - which is smaller in length. You may be able to save 25 percent to 30 percent than shipping on a regular-sized trailer.
3. Check out your shipping options on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes it is cheaper to ship by van line than common carrier; sometimes air freight is your best bet. Don't make assumptions.
4. Work with your carrier on cost savings. Some common items negotiated on a shipment:
  - Ship at lower weight. Example: Your cargo's space reservation comes out to 450 cubic feet; if your van line carrier charges by 100 cubic foot increments, see if you can round down to 400 cubic feet instead of up to 500. For example, say your rate per hundred pounds was \$37.45 for a shipment going from Los Angeles to Dallas (1,366 miles). If the carrier charged you for 500 cubic feet, you would pay \$1,310.75. If you were charged for 400 cubic feet, you would only pay \$1,048.60 - \$262 less. Generally, you save 20 percent to 25 percent if your carrier will round down.
  - Ship at lower rate. Your common carrier may be willing to send your shipment at a lower class, giving you a lower rate. For example, if you sent your 500-pound exhibit from ZIP 30301 (Atlanta) to ZIP 90015 (Los Angeles) at Class 125, which is the regular classification for exhibit properties, the rate would be \$97.48 per hundred pounds, and your bill would be \$487.40. But if your carrier would ship your exhibit properties at Class 100 - considered the "exception" rate - instead of Class 125, the rate would drop to \$76.57 per hundred pounds. Your bill at this rate would be \$382.85. The savings: \$104.55.
5. Exhibit transportation is a highly competitive business, with many vendors offering attractive discounts. Some common points for discounting:
  - Shipping to numerous shows.
  - Shipping large volumes/weights.
  - Shipping with the same carrier that handles your products or with which you have a corporate account.

Note: Whatever discount you negotiate, be sure to get it in writing. Otherwise, if the Interstate Commerce Commission audits your carrier, you could be held responsible for any unreported discounts.
6. The best money-savings advice: Establish a relationship with one carrier. Give him a year's worth of business (or more). Pay your bills within 30 days. As a good customer, you will receive the most competitive rates and excellent service.

## Three Ways To Save On Shipping

1. Talk to your carrier. If you have several shows in the same city that are a few weeks apart, ask your transportation carrier to hold your freight. Most good carriers will do this for up to three weeks at no storage charge. However, remember that warehouses only take crated and palletized freight, not pad wrapped.
2. Pack your carpet and pad last. When your exhibit is loaded on the truck, make sure the pad and carpet are packed last so they will be the first items removed from the truck. This will save setup time by cutting down on wait time.
3. Get competitive rates for inbound and outbound shipments. If you ship large amounts of product literature or giveaways, negotiate with your general contractor to adjust your outbound drayage invoice. Ask for this in advance and get it in writing. This can be a substantial savings if, for example, half of your boxes will not be shipped back. Anticipate how many cartons you will not be shipping back from the show, and inform your general contractor.

## Travel

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### Safety Tips For Trade Show Travelers

When traveling to a strange city, make personal safety your first priority. Business travelers can protect themselves from being victims by taking a few precautionary steps. Here are 13 tips to help you stay safe when traveling to shows.

1. Avoid taking late-night or red-eye flights. Try to arrive in the city before dark.
2. Don't carry all your money in your purse in case it is stolen.
3. Carry small bills, so you can pay or tip people quickly without waiting for change.
4. Write down the numbers of all credit cards and ATM cards. Put the list of numbers in a safe place in case your wallet is lost or stolen.
5. Carry quarters, local emergency numbers and your hotel phone number on your person.
6. Try not to be out by yourself after dark (especially women), even if you're driving or taking a cab.
7. If you rent a car, ask for one with automatic door locks/windows. Park in well-lit areas.
8. Have good directions, drive with doors locked. Always have someone walk you to your car.
9. If you are invited to dinner by a supplier or client whom you don't know very well, bring a friend or ask to dine in the hotel restaurant.
10. Stay at reputable hotels in better areas.
11. Ask the hotel desk attendant to write down your room number instead of saying it aloud.
12. Lock and double lock your hotel room door at all times. Check the locks on the windows and any adjoining room door in suites.
13. Don't wear your name badge off the floor.

## Installation & Dismantle

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### Contractor Lingo

Whether you're new to trade shows or a seasoned pro, it can be difficult to remember which contractor does what. Here's a quick glossary of what service each contractor performs.

**Exclusive Contractor** - Contractor appointed by show or building management as the sole provider of specified services. Services can include facility telecommunications, plumbing and electrical services.

**Exhibitor-Appointed Contractor (EAC)** - Any company (other than the "official" contractor) providing a service and needing access to an exhibit during installation, show dates and dismantling. Often used to refer to a subcontractor who is appointed by an exhibitor to install and dismantle their exhibit. Also referred to as an independent contractor.

**Exhibitor-Appointed Contractor Form (EAC Form)** - A form completed by an exhibitor 30 to 60 days prior to the show. This form notifies the general contractor of your intent to have an exhibitor-appointed contractor perform services at the show.

**General Contractor** - The contractor hired by show management to set up the show. Responsibilities can include drayage, signs, laying hall carpet, rental displays, decoration, at-show labor and clean up. This contractor is also known as the official contractor or official general contractor.

**Official Contractor** - A select group of contracted companies approved by show management that is responsible for exhibit setup, maintenance and dismantle.

### Fast Product Station Setup

Want to speed up your setup? Think about putting your product display stations on wheels. With this approach, your product pedestals can be quickly wheeled off the truck and into your exhibit. Put them in place in the exhibit, and then lock the wheels. Bonus: It allows you to easily reconfigure product stations.

## Guide Those Crate Packers

Unless the exhibit manager is personally on-site for dismantle, the chances that crates will get properly packed is almost nil. You can make a difference with a camera. Take a picture of the properly packed crate and staple it to the inside lid. That way, whoever packs the crate will have a visual reference of where things should go.

## How To Qualify An EAC

Planning to work with exhibitor-appointed contractors (EACs) for your next show? Use these questions to narrow down the competition and find an EAC that will best serve your needs.

Questions to ask to qualify an exhibitor-appointed contractor:

1. How long has your company been in business?
2. Will you provide me with a copy of liability and workers' compensation insurance certificates?
3. I'm running a credit check; is there anything you want to tell me?
4. Describe the services you provide:
  - a. Labor
  - b. Warehousing
  - c. Exhibit repair
  - d. Graphic capabilities
  - e. Supervision
  - f. Trucking
  - g. Coordination services
5. What do you charge for your services?
6. Provide three exhibit manager references you invoice directly.
7. Provide two exhibit producer account executive references.
8. What is your availability after hours for emergencies?
9. Do you have a good working relationship with other contractors?
10. What is your payment policy?
11. How many clients do you have for this show?
12. How well equipped are you in the field (on the show floor)?
13. Do you belong to a trade association?

## IOU What For I&D?

Is there a formula for calculating the average cost per square foot for I&D?

Believe it or not, there is. According to the Trade Show Bureau, the average hourly labor rate for setup and dismantle is \$39. This wage is based on straight time and excludes the use of mechanized equipment. The average setup/dismantle time for an island or peninsula exhibit is one hour per 8 square feet; and for an in-line booth, one hour per 10 linear feet.

To calculate your I&D costs, simply multiply the hourly labor rate by the number of hours required to set up your exhibit. Let's say you have a 900-square-foot island exhibit. Setup/dismantle time would be 112.5 hours (900 sq. ft. x 8 sq. ft./hour = 112.5 hours). Multiply this figure by \$39, and your total I&D bill should run about \$4,387.50.

Keep in mind, these are just averages. The amount you actually pay depends greatly on the complexity of your exhibit installation and the location of the show. (Overtime is another factor to consider. Find out when straight time and time-and-a-half begins in each show city.) To more accurately calculate your projected I&D costs for each show, multiply your total by the appropriate regional cost adjustment:

- \* New York - 1.3 percent
- \* Northeast, Chicago and California - 1.25 percent
- \* Midwest and Southwest - .95 percent
- \* Florida - .90 percent

Using the previous example, if the show is in Chicago, you would multiply \$4,387.50 by 1.25 percent, which means your labor costs would be \$5,484.38.

## Negotiate Outbound Weights

If you ship catalogs, premiums or other heavy giveaways to a show, always try to negotiate a new outbound weight for your materials handling. For example, say your inbound shipment (exhibit, product, giveaways and other materials) weighs in at 20 CWT. By the end of the show, you know you have given away at least 2 CWT in catalogs; another 3 CWT in computer equipment you plan to ship back via FedEx. Rather than using your original inbound weight, negotiate a new outbound weight of 15 CWT with the contractor. It's best to do your negotiating on the last day, when you have a good idea of how much product you have distributed over the course of the show. Potential savings: \$300, at \$60 per CWT.

## Protect Carpet From Forklifts

To protect your carpet from heavy forklift traffic, have your installation and dismantle company place inverted carpet remnants or heavy cardboard along the sides and on the corners. It won't tear like plastic coverings, and it stands up to forklift drivers who cut corners.

## Protecting Your Exhibit From Theft

Strange thing happens after tear down and before your exhibit leaves the show floor. Pieces of your exhibit (typically expensive stuff like computer monitors) often disappear, never to be seen again. Of course, you never figure out who's responsible. What can you do to protect yourself - other than sit there and wait for your trucking company to arrive? After tear down, when your exhibit is most vulnerable to theft, shrink-wrap any loose contents to a pallet. (Black shrink-wrap is best so nobody can see what's underneath.) This will make it more difficult for sticky fingers to easily grab your property.

## Saving Money on I&D

The life of an exhibit manager is busy. However, making yourself available on the show floor for setup and tear down can save big bucks. Installation and dismantle companies will typically add 25 percent to 30 percent to your bill if you want them to supervise the process.

## Shipping Promo Items Direct?

Trade show promotional giveaways are often a last-minute item, and deadlines are extremely tight. For one of its largest trade shows, Xn Technologies had planned a clever giveaway that tied nicely to its product. The timing was tight, so the company wanted the manufacturer to deliver the promo items directly to show site. They made the deadline but unfortunately for us, the giveaways were shipped in 30 un-palletized boxes. Show management charged the minimum drayage charge (\$100) for each box. A whopping drayage bill of \$3,000. Oops-big-time budget blowout! The marketing department learned a valuable lesson - if you ship to show site, specify that the boxes must be palletized together. That way, you'll only pay drayage on one item instead of 30 boxes.

## Small Exhibitor Perk

Who said being small doesn't have its benefits? If you have an exhibit that requires no tools and takes no more than 30 minutes to install, most convention centers allow you to install the exhibit yourself. This not only saves considerable money in union wages, but time, too, since you won't have to wait for labor crews for setup.

## It's Show Time

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### Are You Covered?

The main reason exhibit managers should look into insuring their exhibit properties is the extreme vulnerability of shipments traveling to and from trade shows. When you consider the average cost of a new custom exhibit is \$364,000, insurance seems more a question of "What kind?" than "Use it or not?"

You can obtain insurance for your exhibit through two sources: a corporate policy or a policy purchased through your transportation company.

1. Corporate policy. Most companies have their own insurance. Two questions to ask about your corporate policy are:
  - Does the policy cover properties once they leave the premises?

- How much insurance coverage is there, and what is the deductible? Most corporate policies have huge deductibles (typically \$5,000 or more), which in effect means the exhibitor is "self-insured" except for large losses.
2. Transportation company policy. You can also buy insurance through your transportation company:
- Most transportation companies offer "trip transit" coverage, which insures your shipment traveling to and from a show - but not once it's unloaded from the truck or on the show floor. However, if your corporate policy covers your exhibit properties at shows, you may opt for a trip transit policy. Typically, the premium is \$3 per \$1,000 of coverage.
  - A more inclusive type of insurance that you can purchase through your transportation company is an "exhibition floater" policy. This policy covers your exhibit properties both in transit and while at shows. Typically the premium is \$6 per \$1,000 of coverage.
  - Even if you don't purchase either of these policies, your shipment is automatically insured by your transportation company. This coverage is called "released value" or "limited liability" and is included in the basic transportation charge. However, the disadvantage to this is that the "released value" is typically far below the actual value of your shipment (as low as 60 cents per pound per article).

## Cutting Your Carpet Cleaning Bill

Every little bit helps when you're trying to trim expenses from your trade show budget. For example, you can save on booth cleaning costs by purchasing your own upright or hand-held vacuum (some unions don't allow upright vacuums) to clean your carpet. Carpet cleaning costs an average of 17 cents per square foot per day. For a 400-square-foot booth over a four-day show, you pay \$272. The average upright vacuum costs \$150, so it more than pays for itself after one show.

If lugging a vacuum to shows doesn't appeal to you, you can still cut costs by having your carpet cleaned every other day instead of every day. Also, don't get your whole carpet cleaned if it only needs "spot-cleaning." For those unexpected spills, keep a portable carpet cleaner in your gang box. (It's great for cleaning spots off booth furniture, too.)

## Don't Leave Home Without These

There are certain company forms, phone lists, sales tools, brochures, sample kits, and so on, that are indispensable at trade shows. Assemble these into one packet or binder that you hand-carry to the show yourself. This way you'll have all the answers to any questions that might come up on-site right at your fingertips. Here's what you should include:

- Sales territory maps with addresses and phone numbers of all dealer/distributor/sales offices.
- Annual and/or quarterly corporate financial reports.
- Preprinted Fed-Ex forms, your company stationery and a dozen #10 envelopes.
- Company phone directory and home phone numbers for critical employees.
- Press packet including corporate background and current press releases.
- Product brochures, collateral information, order forms, price lists, photos and spec sheets, and competitive product information.
- Exhibit floor plan with product layout information, list of exhibitors showing your products and their booth numbers (if appropriate), copy of show book listing all exhibitors and booth numbers.
- Staff training materials used in pre-show training session.

## Double-Duty Custom Exhibitry

Want to get the most for your exhibit dollars? Don't send your exhibit materials to the warehouse or the junkyard after shows. Instead, find another way to use them. For example, Amada America recently built two new 16-foot corporate ID towers. Its existing 12-foot towers will go to work in the on-site company showroom. And between shows, lighting that typically surrounds new products on the show floor will spotlight new products in the showroom.

## Eight Exhibit Killers

The best way to come up with a killer exhibit is to avoid exhibit killers - practices that keep your exhibit from ever succeeding. Following are eight problems to avoid with your next exhibit:

1. Lacking lead-time - Designing an exhibit is a complex process. Do not leave it until the last minute. Coordinating booth construction under time constraints can increase costs 50 to 75 percent.
2. Fixed design - Don't make a design decision until you know your options. Keep your objectives tight but your options loose until you see what is out there. An exhibit you hadn't thought of may do the job better than what you are considering.
3. Inflexible budget - Don't determine the budget until after you've shopped around. Get an idea of what an exhibit that will meet your needs will cost.
4. Flat thinking - Remember, an exhibit is going to be a three-dimensional representation of your company. When outsourcing design responsibilities, make sure your supplier understands 3-D design.
5. Convuluted graphics - The considerations for graphics are numerous. A rule of thumb: Less is more. Remember that the booth is just bait - it only exists to get attendees to step on your carpet.
6. Overload - You're designing an exhibit, not a catalog. All you want to do is open a dialogue with attendees about your company's product or service. You don't have to exhibit your company's entire product line.
7. Scrimping - Remember that an exhibit is an investment. Cutting elements out of an exhibit design proposal so that it will fit into your budget may cost you money in the long run.
8. Gimmicks - At the same time, don't spend money unnecessarily. Don't blow the budget on bells and whistles that won't contribute to your bottom line - the show.

## Emergency Response

You never know when disaster might strike the show floor. In January, part of the roof collapsed at Montreal's Olympic Stadium; in March, a four-alarm fire destroyed crates in a loading dock area at Detroit's Cobo Center. What do you do when an unexpected emergency arises? Here's an "emergency tips" sheet Design Craftsmen created for its clients and other exhibitors who had exhibits set up in the Cobo Center at the time of the fire. These tips may come in handy if you find yourself faced with a sudden, unanticipated show disaster.

Call your insurance agent to arrange for an immediate damage assessment.

1. Contact an experienced technician to thoroughly check all electrical, AV and computer equipment for damage to circuitry.
2. Research cleaning techniques and products before use to prevent adverse chemical reactions and further damage. Special techniques may be needed to remove odor and stains from fabric and other porous materials.
3. Contact your exhibit house regarding the possibility of rapid refurbishment, or locate a local company that can quickly provide their services.
4. Contact show management to assess the condition of your crates. If your crates have been destroyed, arrange for padding and blanket wrapping to protect individual exhibit elements during shipping.
5. Find an experienced, reputable shipping company to safely transport your exhibits. Remember that you may incur additional costs due to pad-wrapped loads, which require use of air-ride trucks.
6. Uncrated exhibits may require more warehouse space than crated exhibits would. Remember to budget accordingly.

## How Long Do Attendees Stay?

A recent report by trade show measurement firm Exhibit Surveys Inc. studied the habits of attendees while visiting trade shows. The report found that the average exhibitor:

- Visits the show over a two-day period.
- Spends 8.8 hours viewing exhibits.
- Visits 20 exhibits.
- Stays 23 minutes in each exhibit visited.

Personal time, such as making phone calls, taking bathroom breaks, eating and walking the floor are compensated for within the numbers above.

## Let Your Fingers Do The Walking

Every exhibit manager has faced an 11th hour snafu that required a hasty trip to a hardware or electronics store. The last-minute stress is typically compounded by the panic of finding one of these stores on the spur of the moment. Why not avoid the extra hassles by locating them in advance?

Make a list of your show cities and visit an online phone-listing service such as [www.yellowpages.com](http://www.yellowpages.com). Find the addresses and phone numbers of your typical emergency stores such as Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Radio Shack, etc. Also identify stores specializing in any hard-to-find items your exhibit needs, such as adapters, wiring or computer peripherals.

Numbers and addresses in hand, you'll have one less hurdle to clear on your next last-minute run.

## Spend Now, Save Later

Wood and laminate exhibits are inexpensive to build, but can haunt you as the ghost of drayage costs to come. An aluminum exhibit, while more expensive up front, will weigh only about 25 percent as much as its wood and laminate equivalent. Aluminum can also be up to 100 times stronger than wood and can reduce refurbishment costs over the long term because of its durability.

A technique called panelizing is another way to save and can reduce refurb costs over an exhibit's lifespan. Have a large surface, such as a 40-by-40 back wall, constructed of small, manageable pieces of material. A two-by-four-foot panel is easier and less expensive to replace or re-laminate than a larger one.

## Special offers

It is common practice to offer "show specials" at a slightly higher than usual discount or with better terms such as free shipping as an incentive to purchase on the trade show floor. You may want to pre-promote your "show special" by sending a pre-announcement to attendees. Contact the convention organizers to see if you can purchase the pre-registered attendance list. Often such lists are available preprinted on mailing labels. Don't forget to include your current and known potential customers in your mailing. You may want to offer this group of consumers the "show special" even if they don't plan on attending. Extend the offer for some limited period of time and specify how they can place an order.

## Opening new accounts

Many companies offer "new account specials" at trade shows. Consider offering a slightly better discount on the opening order or, perhaps, a free gift or merchandise item of limited value. You may want to offer a freebie to get prospective consumers to drop by your booth. Anything that will attract attendees to your booth, obviously, will increase your sales opportunities.

You may do better at opening new accounts by calling show attendees right after the show closes. Or you can pass on the names of those people who visited your booth to your sales representatives for follow-up. Try setting up a "Prize Bowl" to collect business cards for a grand give-away drawing. This can be a great way to amass leads! If you really want to attract new accounts, consider waiving credit checks or prepayments on first orders under a certain value. Be sure to inform such clients, however, that further credit orders will be contingent upon a favorable credit report.

## Building relationships with current customers

No amount of dazzle in your booth is likely to do as much for building positive relationships with customers as taking the time to sit down and talk. The more senior the employees you have "working" the booth, the better. This shows that you take your trade show attendance seriously. Take care that your representatives are well groomed, wear smiles, and possess a strong handshake. These seemingly small touches can go a long way toward building and maintaining customer relationships through trade shows.

Trade show attendees, even if current customers, can become frustrated if no one is available to talk to them. This is especially true at large-company booths with heavy traffic. The concern at smaller booths may be the absence of the one attending company representative. Make sure you have adequate personnel in your booth at all times.

## Launching a new product line

To launch a new product line at a trade show, be prepared to offer potential customers as much specific information about the new product line as possible. It is always ideal to have a working sample of the product, but that isn't always possible. If this is the case, try to represent the new product as accurately as possible with prototypes, photographs, product specification sheets, or any other type of substantive material that will best display the salient features of the new product. To create excitement about your new offerings and increase the number of visitors to your booth, many companies display life-size posters or even three-dimensional representations of their new products.



## Emphasizing the firm's unique attributes

In the circus-like atmosphere of many trade shows, it is difficult to convey the subtle or numerous differences between your firm and product and that of your competition. The most effective way to set yourself apart from the noise is to focus on one major delineating feature of your product by highlighting it in a spectacular way. For example, you may choose to display a large sign reading "The Firm That Offers Free Freight All The Time," or "Product Support Is Our #1 Concern," or "Leading-Edge Products."

## Portraying the firm as a major player in the industry

To portray your firm as a major player in the industry at a major trade show is going to cost a great deal of money. So, before you take this tack, you need to carefully consider the image ramifications of portraying yourself as a major player. You may have the best product on the market, but if you don't have significant market share or a broad product line, you will look foolish trying to palm yourself off as an industry leader.

If you can swing the image, you will have to do more than just rent the largest floor space. What you do with that space will make a more significant impression on customers. A professional, polished, display is absolutely essential. If you need to economize, give heavy emphasis to displaying your firm's name at the price of de-emphasizing product displays.

## Seeking publicity in trade publications

Send press releases and call the editors of trade publications well before convention time. Be sure to have information available on special offers, promotions, or give-aways during the shows and, of course, information on new products. These are your best bets for getting press attention. Remember, trade publications are also read by key prospects who are unable to attend the show.

## Seeking independent sales representatives

Independent sales representatives are most likely to respond to a professional booth display. They cruise show floors and size up a company at a glance. If your booth looks great, they will think you have a saleable product. You may wish to display a small, neat sign reading "Sales representatives needed for some territories." Even if you don't want to be as blatant in your representative search as a sign indicates, trade shows can be a terrific proving ground for lining up new sales representatives.

## Seeking overseas distributors

Foreign distributors tend to avoid the smaller, least effective trade show booths. But even if your budget is tight, make sure your products are represented accurately. Given a choice, foreign distributors prefer seeing good production models of products over fancy booth displays. And unlike current domestic distributors, foreign distributors will be as interested in your existing product line as they will be in new offerings. The best place to find overseas distributors is at large international shows. But large national shows will draw some foreign candidates as well.

## Seeking large distributors

Many key employees from large firms will be wandering the trade show floor looking for new ideas and products from small companies that would add to their distribution line. To attract a large distributor or distribution firm, place your product or product representation at the forefront of your booth. Have your company representatives make eye contact and conversation with personnel from large distribution houses that pass by the booth.

## Meeting with key accounts

If you hope to have meaningful meetings with key accounts, you need to make arrangements in advance. If you have the luxury of leaving your booth periodically, the ideal situation is to meet your key accounts off the trade show floor. If this isn't possible, set up an area in your booth that is private, outfitted with chairs and a table, and relatively quiet in which to conduct your meetings. Instruct booth representatives to keep interruptions to a minimum while you are in the meeting.

Convention meetings are tricky. Everyone wants to get the attention of key buyers. It isn't unusual to have appointments changed or cancelled. You might even be stood up entirely. Don't be surprised.

## In-depth demonstrations

If you need the full attention of current or prospective customers to demonstrate your product or service, you may wish to divide your booth

into an area for displays and an area for demonstrations. Consider roping off the rear section of your booth for a seating or meeting area that will offer a comfortable atmosphere for viewing demonstrations. Remember, though, to encourage customers to stay at your booth for more than a cursory overview. During a busy trade show you'll need a really hot product or an incredibly exciting presentation.

## Solving problems for customers

While trade show exhibitors often enter into the venture very excited about publicly presenting their new products, what your customers may hope to accomplish through trade show attendance may, surprisingly for you, not even include viewing your new products. They may hope to resolve vendor, delivery, quality, billing, or other significant issues. Always be prepared to spend time restoring good relationships with some of your customers.

## Checking out competitors' products

Virtually all exhibitors at trade shows budget time for surveying their competitor's wares and latest offerings. Keep in mind, however, that while you are doing this—and it may be important—you aren't in your booth selling to and meeting customers. If you need to go on a competitor scouting expedition, just make sure your booth will be adequately and professionally staffed in your absence.

## Seeking new products or services to distribute or buy

Trade shows afford a fast way to peruse other firm's products or services that you may wish to distribute or buy. Be cautious. It is easy to make hasty and premature decisions during the excitement of a trade show. If you have any hesitation at all about coming to an agreement at a trade show, back off until you get home and have a chance to think it through. Or, at the very least, wait until the end of the show, when you have had a chance to evaluate all of the potential products or services that may enhance your ability to meet your own customer's needs.

## Keeping up contacts

Keep careful track of every contact you meet during a trade show. Even a direct competitor can be a source of important information in the future. Make a point of asking for business cards and handing out yours. And keep notes for future reference.

## Getting the Most out of Exhibiting at Trade Shows

Exhibiting at trade shows can be a cost-effective way to generate business, whether you are a new entrepreneur or have been in business for years. Some exhibitors, however, do not experience the success of others. The success of the exhibitor is the responsibility of the exhibitor, not the trade show organizer. The organizers responsibility is to promote the show, fill the exhibits and fill the show with large numbers of visitors. Being at the right show for your business is the first step. Attracting visitors to your exhibit is the next step and may be a challenge, and once the visitor is there, getting them to buy your product or service, or agree to future contact is another challenge. Bring to mind a time when you either participated at a trade show or were a visitor at a trade show – what attracted you to an exhibit, and what turned you off?

Here are 5 success tips that will assist you in enhancing your experience as an exhibitor at your first or next trade show.

1. **Seating.** Sitting on a barstool will keep you at eye-level with most visitors. Avoid chairs at regular height as it creates a sense of distance between you and your visitors, thus breaking rapport with them.
2. **Create gender balance.** Balancing the number of men and women in your exhibit will help ensure your visitors feel comfortable during their visit. An exhibit staffed by all men or all women may not be as inviting to the opposite sex. In addition to gender balance, when possible, have different ages of staff at your exhibit to ensure that visitors can 'relate' to the staff at your exhibit.
3. **Less is more** when it comes to displaying your literature -it is better to replenish your materials frequently than have a disorganized surplus at any one time. Large piles of flyers or 'show-special' handouts may appear to some visitors that no one has taken an interest in your materials. Store large quantities of your handouts and flyers under your table and only display short, smaller piles at any one time.
4. **Offer carry bags.** Many visitors collect a multitude of samples, brochures, and business cards during the show. Offer them a carry bag that displays your company logo. Not only will you appear as the 'hero' for giving them a handy carry bag, you will also have your name/logo displayed at the Show while they are browsing the other exhibits.

5. **Use a photo.** Put a head-and-shoulders photo of yourself or a photo of your product on your literature. These photos will help visitors remember you when they browse through your materials at a later date. Many visitors collect a multitude of flyers and brochures during the show and when they get back to their office, they sift through each piece, usually tossing away what they don't need. Having your photo on your materials will help them 'reconnect' with you again.

## How to Make an Exhibition of Yourself

Trade shows and exhibitions can be a valuable promotion method for your company, whether they are a big national or international show, or a local one-day event put on by your local Chamber of Commerce. But they can be expensive (in terms of both time and money), tiring and frustrating.

Here are a few tips which may make your exhibition presence more effective:

1. If possible, go to the show as a visitor in the preceding year. That way you will get a flavour of the atmosphere and be able to gauge if the sort of people visiting are your type of potential customer. If you can't do this, ask the exhibition organiser for a catalog from the previous year's show, and for a profile of the visitors who attended. The catalog will help you to identify if your competitors have exhibited there.
2. Ask your existing customers if they have visited or intend to visit the show. If the answer is 'yes' then your potential customers may also be visiting.
3. If you have a choice of stand location, try to get one:
  - o Near to the entrance
  - o Near to the bar / buffet
  - o Near to the toilets
4. Can you man the stand effectively? You can't even do a one-day show on your own. If you are a small business, try to involve friends and family who might be able to relieve you for an hour or so.
5. Make sure that you allocate enough time after the show to follow up sales leads. Don't leave them for more than a week, or the leads will grow cold. Chances are that most of your visitors will have thrown away the literature that they picked up on your stand.
6. Plan ahead. Rule #1 of exhibitions is that "if anything can go wrong, it will"! Be sure to have your "Exhibitor's Survival Kit" with you. This should include everyday items such as sticky tape (double-sided), scissors, screwdrivers, knife (a Swiss Army knife is indispensable), Velcro strips, plain white card, felt tip pens, stapler - whatever you can think of. Chances are that what you need is what you have forgotten to bring with you!
7. Take 50 per cent more literature (and business cards) than you think you will need.
8. When designing your stand, try to get motion, activity and sound on it to attract attention.
9. Make sure that any equipment you have is spotless. Harsh exhibition lights will show up the smallest bit of dirt.
10. Try to make eye contact with people passing your stand (they will try to avoid it!) When you've got their attention do **not** say "Can I help you?". The answer will be "no". Ask them an open-ended question such as "What are you particularly interested in?". If visitors are wearing name badges, try to glimpse their name before speaking to them, then give them a big smile and say "Hello Mr XXX...". It works wonders!
11. Try to make time to visit other exhibitors' stands. You can often do as much business with them as with visitors to the exhibition.
12. Never smoke or eat on the stand. And try to avoid sitting down, no matter how much your feet and legs ache.
13. Go easy on the evening entertainment. The biggest prospect you have ever had might appear on your stand at 9 am the following morning.
14. Last, but not least, never once lose your confidence or enthusiasm throughout the whole exhibition.

Exhibitions can be expensive, time consuming and very tiring. But they can also be very rewarding.

## Demonstrations

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### Are You Spending Time With Every Show Visitor? Stop That!

One of the hardest concepts for some exhibitors to understand is that everyone at the show is not a prospect. At any show, there are really only three types of prospects for your product or service. Handling each one correctly will save you time and save them time.

Prospects can generally be classified into three types:

**Type A:** Ready to order or buy now. These are the people you came to the show to attract and find. You want to spend quality time with them.

**Type B:** Interested, but need more information. These are the people you want to convert to Type A. If you can determine who they are, you can do more than just give them a product sheet which they may not read later.

**Type C:** Not qualified or not interested. Either they truly don't want or need your product, or they think they don't. If they don't really have any use for your product, don't waste time with them. If they don't think they need it, then you should try and avoid anything other than being nice to them. The only exceptions to this are when you are overstaffed in the booth and need something for everyone to do (I would send some home to get more real work done), or the show has very low traffic, in which case you are really back to being overstaffed.

Once you've classified attendees, the next step is draw the best prospects to your booth. Here are two ways to attract the best prospects.

1. **Use good signs.** The signs in your booth can help prospects determine their interest quickly. Clear descriptions of who will benefit (and why) will get people to say to themselves "Hey, that's me! Perhaps I should look into this further." They walk into the booth with an open mind already. Don't stand in the aisle dragging people into the booth with the hope of obtaining a cool premium. This rarely results in more sales. More leads, perhaps, but not necessarily more sales.
2. **Teach things in your presentations.** Product presentations can draw large crowds. Sprinkle trivia about the industry or your product category throughout the presentation so everyone watching feels that they are learning something in addition to your product's features and benefits. Make sure that the two important post-presentation options for each person are made clear during the presentation and at the end. Identify where they should go next: either to the order desk or to the in-depth demos.

As they view the presentation, the Type C prospects will probably realize who they are. But if they learn something in the presentation, then they'll leave with a good feeling about the company and its products -- without wasting your staff's time. (Perhaps offer them a small giveaway or brochure with your company's details as well.) Resist the urge to chase after the Type C prospects. If they are going to become customers, then you'll get them later.

### Creating An Eye-Level Attraction

When running a demonstration in your exhibit, it pays to make sure attendees can see what's going on. At the Midwest Expo in Minneapolis, blender manufacturer Vita-Mix did just that. The company placed a blender front and center on a table in its 10-by-10-foot exhibit. It then made sure the blender was at eye level by using an elevated table and an additional pedestal under the blender. Attendees could step right up to the blender and watch as staffers promoted the product benefits.

### Creating Effective Demos: Six Points To Consider

When putting together an exhibit demonstration, your goal is to deliver the best message in a concise, effective fashion. Here are some questions that will help you hone your demonstration message.

1. What do you want to say about the product? Keep it to two or three key message points. Know who your target market is. What products do they need to have in place to use your product?
2. What are the benefits to the users? Too often, exhibitors focus on features. Features aren't necessarily important to the person buying your product. They want to know the benefits they will derive if they buy. Is it going to save them dollars or time? Is it going to help them work more efficiently? Demonstrate the benefits to support other messages you're presenting

at the show of your message instead of hoping/waiting somebody will ask. If you've demonstrated this product before, think about the two most often asked questions, and make them a regular part of your message.

3. How long is your demo? Don't exceed 10 minutes - particularly where there are long product purchase lead times. Don't do a full-blown demonstration; save that for one-on-one sales visits. The goal is to provide enough benefit information to pique attendees' interest so they want to see more after the show.
4. Are you connecting with the crowd? As you present, maintain eye contact with the crowd. If using a computer, use a swing-out keyboard and stand to the side. Watch their nonverbal communication. Are they engaged or losing interest?
5. Are you making the most of your premiums? Use a giveaway that has a link to the product or service. Make sure the company name and phone number is on it. Use the giveaway as a reward for taking the time to watch the demo.

## Creating Presentation Visuals

Let's face it. Not many of us like to speak in public, but for some jobs it's a fact of life. Follow these tips for effective presentation visuals when conducting your next staff training meeting or corporate presentation:

**White space:** Only two-thirds of your slide space should be taken up with words.

**Word count:** The rule of thumb is no more than six lines per slide and six words per line.

**Font:** Don't use more than two font styles per slide. Titles should be at least 36 point, and text should be a minimum of 24 point.

**Color:** Each color conveys different feelings: black and white urges decision; yellow shows confidence; blue connotes reliability; green is pleasant; brown allows non-commitment.

## Does The Demo Need A Presenter?

Do you need a live presenter at every demo in your booth? It depends on your audience and objectives. At industrial equipment shows, many companies have running machinery demos. Packaging machinery manufacturer Nordson Corp. has found that if the target audience is nontechnical attendees, then a live presenter is useful. The presenter can not only talk about the company but also explain why the machine is so great and put it in "nontechie" terms. A more technical audience will look at the machine regardless of whether a presenter is there. They'll understand what's going on with the demo with the help of simple graphics. Of course, this doesn't mean you want to leave your booth unstaffed. It just means you don't have to train presenters or create scripts for formal presentations for your more technical show audiences. Just make sure you have technical staffers available to answer specific questions.

## Handling Proprietary Product Demos

If you demo proprietary equipment on the show floor, it can be difficult to keep "curious" competitors' eyes off it. Here's one trick used by Honeywell Inc.'s business and commuter aviation systems. For one at-show proprietary product demo, customer names and addresses were requested from each manager prior to the show, and an exclusive invitation list was collected. These customers were encouraged to schedule in-booth demo times prior to the show. (This step also gave in-booth staff a list of "hot" customers who needed VIP treatment.)

At the show, the demo station was placed in one corner of the upstairs conference room. A staffer at the foot of the stairs to the conference room checked in all visitors and gave them special badges admitting them to the second-level demo. Customers who had received the mailing were given first dibs on the demos; qualified walk-in customers were allowed in as time allowed. In addition, all visitors were asked to sign in. This list provided information for follow-up mailings to this top-flight group of visitors.

## Inform And Entertain

Let's face it, attendees don't just come to trade shows to be informed and educated. They also come to be entertained. People tend to remember the exhibits where they had a good time while also receiving valuable information. How can you find the right balance between education and entertainment at your next show? These four ideas will help you get started.

Tie in to your product-Don't just have something fun in your exhibit for the sake of fun. Whatever activity or collateral you use should tie in with your company or products. This will help attendees connect your product with the enjoyable time they had in your exhibit.

Connect the fun with your audience-A sports-themed game show may not be the best way to incorporate fun into your presence at the American College of Nurse-Midwives Annual Meeting. Likewise, having chef Julia Childs give a cooking demonstration in your World of Concrete exhibit may not get an optimal response.

Sell fun-If you want attendees to enjoy themselves, you need your booth staffers to sell the fun. Make sure everyone who will be working your exhibit knows that it's a priority. Consider conducting some pre-show staffing activities to get staffers pumped for the show. Their fun will be contagious.

Stay focused-No matter how enjoyable you make your exhibit presence, don't forget why you're there. Don't focus so much on entertaining that you neglect attendees' needs or fail to give them all the information they need.

## Preparing Powerful Presentations

To make the most of your company's next trade show presentation, follow these nine tips.

1. Clearly define your objectives and messages before planning your presentation.
2. Whenever possible, include real situations in your presentations that are quickly and easily identified by your audience.
3. Be brief! If your audience better understands just two benefits of doing business with your company, your presentation has done its job.
4. Keep it simple. Save the technical details for later.
5. Different audiences have different personalities. For instance, show-site presentations usually work well for industries with rapidly emerging technologies, such as computers, telecommunications, financial services, etc.
6. Hire talented people who can think on their feet, know how to work a room and have personal magnetism.
7. Integrate technology into your presentations, such as multimedia or animation. When done well, it can draw attention to your presentation and assist in delivering the message.
8. Consider live presentations for international trade fairs. It can be a great way to stand out from the crowd.
9. To capitalize on your success, make sure your audience takes an action - filling out a lead card or talking to a sales representative - that will expedite the selling process.

## Presentation Techniques That Engage Customers

Twelve Ideas for Engaging Customers

Ready to interact with your audience? Here are a dozen ideas to help start the creative process.

**Low-level interaction** - making the audience feel like a unique group.

1. **Yes, I believe.** Ask for feedback, even simply having members acknowledge what you just said - such as, "Does this idea sound promising, Carol?" Hand-raising, filling out cards, shouting out answers or talking back - these response techniques all involve the audience.
2. **"Surround sound."** When you have a big group, play the back of the room. It's easy for presenters to get sucked into only addressing the people in the front row. Involve the people in the back row, and it will have a wave effect of everybody getting involved.
3. **Look at me.** Basic eye contact works. The presenter shouldn't look over people's heads. Get off the stage and into the audience. Touch someone's shoulder, shake hands, pat someone's back, read name tags to address people personally. All this humanizes the presentation.
4. **I'm on your side.** Start the presentation with a fairly straight presenter on stage. In the audience, have a "plant" or "heckler." This person will speak out, reflecting the opinions, feelings and ideas of the audience, like their skepticism. For example, the audience may listen to a presenter's product claim and think, "A simple solution? I've heard this at every booth here." So the heckler would voice that opinion to the presenter. This way, the presenter has the opportunity to counteract the objections and deal with the audience's skepticism by addressing the heckler.
5. **Stand up and be counted.** Ask qualifying questions of the audience. For instance, ask a group "How many of you have used a PCMCIA card?" If nobody has, then proceed in a certain way. If some people have, go another way. For 90 percent of the presentation, the audience responses are not going to affect the outcome - the script is already written. But the audience can supply the answers you need to move the presentation along. The big benefit: Staffers can use those qualifying questions, even if the audience members simply respond by raising their hands. The booth staff can pay attention and key in on people who have answered certain questions. Prospects are identifying themselves.

6. **Guinea pigs.** If one of the exhibitor's key points is to show how simple something is to use, bring up someone from the audience to perform the demonstration or put it together. It's a lot stronger than having the presenter do it.
7. **Q&A.** If it's a small group, you might ask questions and have the audience respond, almost engaging in a dialog. This kind of situation works better with a more intimate crowd.
8. **Cast members.** Pick out a good sport from the audience and say, "Look, this guy is an MIS manager (or whatever audience group you have), and he has a question." Then hand the person a question on a notecard to read to the presenter.
9. **Survey says.** Use a two-part card to poll the audience before and after the presentation to gain feedback on two things: 1) which topics you should present to the audience and 2) what attendees found most interesting. For example, you could prepare a presentation with five possible segments. When the audience sits down, they fill out the first card indicating which topics they want to hear. Card gatherers do a quick tally, and you deliver a "customized" presentation based on a particular audience's interests. (After the show, you also can use this information as market research. For example, you can see that 90 percent of the audience was interested in topic A, but nobody cared about topic E.) Then after you present each section, ask attendees to respond to how important the information you delivered was to them. At the end of the show, the audience completes the remaining qualifying questions, and you hold a prize drawing. Viola. After the show, you have detailed information to use in your follow-up with prospects.
10. **Joy buzzers.** Give the audience electronic controllers to respond to questions. Everybody can respond, and you have immediate results that can be tabulated, analyzed and displayed via computer graphics. These electronic response mechanisms work great with game shows. Instead of having just two contestants up on stage, everybody can play the game.
11. **Family feud.** With multimedia game-show environments, you can divide the audience into teams, then test them on the material they just learned during the main presentation. You can control the screens and sound effects when the audience delivers correct or incorrect responses. And all the while, you're reinforcing your key messages.
12. **Oprah's on.** Use video cameras and monitors to set up a talk show format. The presenter can be the talk show host and the guests could be audience members - or technical experts from your company who answer audience questions. The trick is to design the presentation so whatever the audience says leads to the next thing.

## Quiz 'em

If you're looking for a way to increase visitor activity at your booth, try throwing a pop quiz. It wasn't fun when your teacher did it to you in high school but, for some reason, adults love to take quizzes, especially if there's a prize for simply participating. Create the quiz with questions about your company and products. Besides having a good time at your booth, your visitors will leave with important facts about your company in their minds - better there than in a brochure they may throw out. Quizzes work, and they're cost effective.

## Speak Easy

Does the thought of speaking in front of a group of people make you tremble with fear? Public speaking is a part of corporate culture, and you can overcome your fears. Here are five ways to calm yourself down and speak with ease at your next public speaking function.

**Arrive early** - Familiarize yourself with the surroundings, test your microphone and make sure all of your visual aids are in working order.

**Remain calm** - Relax before you speak with a low-key activity, such as doodling or doing a crossword puzzle.

**Construct a worst-case scenario** - Anticipate the worst questions you could imagine being asked. Practice your responses with friends or in front of a mirror so you won't be flustered or caught off guard.

**Avoid caffeine and alcohol** - Coffee will make you more nervous, and alcohol may impair your thinking and speaking abilities.

**Maintain eye contact** - The most compelling messages are delivered when the focus of your gaze starts and finishes in the eyes. Eye focus is a powerful tool especially when you're under pressure. Would you trust a person who wouldn't look you in the eye?

## Ten Point Presentation Strategy-Builder

Presentations are guaranteed to draw attention to an exhibit. But "stand-alone" presentations are only a Band-Aid. Any presentation must be included in an overall exhibit strategy. To develop your own presentation-integration strategy, work through this 10-point planning assessment. Each response will be a valuable component in your final strategy. The result: a well-integrated presentation that supports and enhances your efforts throughout the exhibit.

1. **Audience.** Who is our target audience?
2. **Agenda.** How will we get on their agenda prior to the trade show?
3. **Knowledge.** What does our audience know about us already? What knowledge will they bring to the presentation?
4. **Message.** What message will our audience receive from the presentation?
5. **Value.** What is the value - in the audience's context - of that message?
6. **Catalysts.** What will make our target audience come into the booth? What actions will speak to their needs and priorities?
7. **Traffic flow.** What will happen to viewers after our presentation? How will we encourage them to move into the exhibit?
8. **Interaction.** How will our personnel connect with viewers after the presentation?
9. **Education.** What will attendees learn from their visit to our exhibit? What key learning points do we want them to take away?
10. **Measurement.** How will we know if the overall strategy was effective? How will we know if we spent our money wisely?

## Three Effective Demo Techniques

Don't leave your product story up to your audience's imagination-Show them.

Imagine you're at the circus. You take your seat just as the lights go down. A spotlight appears in the center ring revealing the ringmaster. "If you will, direct your attention to the high wire," he proclaims. Oddly, no performer appears. Instead, the ringmaster eloquently describes the types of stunts that might be performed on the high wire. When he finishes, he bows and disappears into the darkness. You are left to only imagine the actual performance.

What a letdown, right? Now you know how show attendees feel about your static product displays.

Ask attendees what draws them into a booth, and they'll most likely answer, "A product demonstration." Exhibits with product demonstrations score the highest memorability ratings from show attendees, according to a study conducted by Exhibit Surveys Inc. Nearly 80 percent of visitors remembered exhibits with product demonstrations. The memorability rating dropped to 71 percent in booths where products were displayed but not demonstrated.

Almost any product can be demonstrated - no matter how large or small, simple or complex. No elaborate stage production is necessary. Just put your product into action. Movement and motion grab attention and interest. Consider the example of a manufacturer of industrial fans. The company could have just displayed its fans or handed out literature and specifications. Instead, booth staffers turned on one of the 6-foot-tall fans. As attendees passed by the exhibit, they were hit by a hair-raising blast of air. Simplistic? Yes. Effective? You bet. Every single "victim" turned to find the source of the sudden breeze, which means every single passerby at least saw this company's booth.

The best demonstrations take advantage of the trade show medium. Visitors attend shows to discover the product attributes that can't be conveyed in a two-dimensional ad. They want to "try it" themselves.

"Product literature and trade advertising are designed to show a product in its best light," says one show attendee. "But on the show floor, I'm seeing a product for what it really is. Actually putting my hands on a product and seeing it in action stimulates additional questions."

But no demonstration sells all by itself. The purpose of a product presentation is to stop traffic so your booth staffers can start a conversation. So don't leave demos unattended. Train booth staffers to use the demo as a "lead-in."

Think about how to demonstrate - not just display - your product. Find a way to highlight its best feature or benefit. At the 1995 National Plant Engineering and Maintenance Show in Chicago, Exhibitor uncovered a bevy of clever yet simple product demos. Here are three solid ideas along with some helpful advice on creating your own effective demos.

### 1. Oh yeah? Well, prove it

Why should visitors believe you when you say your product is the "greatest thing since sliced bread"? "Because I say so" simply doesn't cut it. Attendees want proof. So give it to them. Help them make the leap.

**Example:** The Woods Industries booth wasn't much to look at. A rumpled lavender banner touting something called a "Wobble Light" hung on a gray backwall. What really caught my attention in the booth was the shoving match involving two staffers. They were ganged up - not on each other - but on the Wobble Light itself. You see, Woods Industries promotes the portable work light as "untippable." Thus, booth



staffers took turns pushing, slapping and punching the buoy-shaped beacon. But to no avail. The Wobble Light kept popping right back up ready for more. (There is truth in advertising.) The demonstration made the leap for attendees, from "really, this light is untippable" to "see for yourself, this light is untippable."

#### Suggestions for improvement:

- More interaction with audience. Booth staffers were too passive. In many cases, they waited for attendees to approach them. Booth staffers could easily get visitors involved in the demo by asking passersby to try to knock over the light.
- Narration could be added to heighten drama and humor and show how the product applies to "real life" situations. For example, "Wham, a forklift sideswipes the Wobble Light. Look, it pops right back up. Now you know, you can't keep a good Wobble Light down."

## 2. "And the award for best dramatic performance goes to-"

A little drama carries a lot of impact in your demo. Don't just read from a script; ham it up a little. Create a problem/solution scenario. Then let your product "save the day."

**Example:** Basco Inc. manufactures a line of spill containment products for barrels. At the show, Basco was promoting its Drum Tourniquet, a kind of fiberglass "Band-Aid" equipped with high-powered magnets and suction cup for repairing damaged barrels. While the product itself isn't particularly dramatic, the circumstances under which it's used are.

"Does this ever happen at your plant?" the presenter asks the crowd of plant managers that has gathered. "A barrel is damaged, and suddenly you have a spill containment problem on your hands. What can you do?" He leans over and rips the Drum Tourniquet off the side of a black steel barrel. Water gushes from a nasty gouge in the barrel's side. (You could hear people gasp.) He pauses about five seconds, then leans back over and easy as pie applies the Drum Tourniquet. The water stops immediately. "Problem solved," says the presenter. The crowd cheers.

He even asks attendees to try it for themselves. "See how simple it is?" he asks.

The demo drum sat on wire mesh over a square metal platform. As fast as the water gushed into the trough below, it was pumped back into the barrel. So the demo never had to be stopped to refill the barrel.

#### Suggestions for improvement:

- Only one, better signage. Demo itself is engaging and dramatic. Booth staffers did a good job of qualifying attendees and encouraging audience participation. However, there was no product ID anywhere near the demo. The logo on the actual "tourniquet" was too small to read from aisle.

## 3. The butler didn't do it

Product demos don't have to be predictable. Be creative. Have some fun.

**Example:** Cherokee Industries manufactures Accu-Strike, a chin-operated welding helmet. A mechanism in the helmet lets the welder lower the visor by slightly lowering his chin. "Other helmets are light-activated, which means the light (from the welding torch) has already hit your eyes before your visor is in place," says Roland Shafer, president of Cherokee Industries. "As a result, many welders experience eye irritation."

Instead of hiring a real (as in human) welder to demo the helmet in the booth, Shafer built a mechanical dummy using an old photocopier motor. "Rudy" (as Shafer calls him) repeats the same motion over and over for visitors. He lowers his chin, and the visor snaps into place. Only then does the "welding gun" he's holding light up. When the light goes off, Rudy lifts his chin, which raises the visor. A nearby table tent reads, "It's dark before the arc- not after" (a not-so-subtle dig at the conventional light-activated welding helmets).

"People are fascinated by him," says Shafer. "They wonder if he's real or not." No kidding, Rudy is that lifelike (you can't see his face behind the helmet). Even I had to wonder if he was live or Memorex, which is part of the attraction.

**Suggestions for improvement:** None. Cheap and clever.

- Dummy dressed like welder connects instantly with audience for product. (You'd never know from the company's name what it does. Dummy provides good visual cue.)
- Booth staffers did a good job of initiating conversations with those attendees who stopped to look at Rudy.

## User-Friendly Demos

Sessio, a Seattle-based Internet communications company, created a smart way to get attendees to experience a demo on its Web site. If busy Internet World/Fall attendees didn't have time to watch an in-booth demo, the company offered tickets called Sessio Passes. The tickets provide another way attendees can check out the company Web site and services offered at their own convenience. On the back of each ticket, the company provides a username, a password and the Web address so attendees can log on after the show to view an online demo.

## Lead Tracking

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### Clean Up Trade Show Leads

In an effort to track the quality of leads, FEI Co. exhibit staffers make a habit of getting complete information from every visitor to their exhibit. This includes ensuring that handwriting is legible and contact information is complete.

To help determine the urgency and follow-up priority of each lead, they are coded as follows:

A = Hot lead. Has funding and/or is ready to purchase in the next six months. Needs a sales call immediately.

B = Warm lead. Purchase planned within six to 24 months.

C = Long-term lead. Purchasing timeframe of more than 24 months or just requesting literature.

D = Non-lead. These are inquiries that require no follow-up from sales.

### Clearly Effective Lead Cards

Convincing staff to record the best, most useful information on a lead form is not easy. Allied Telesyn's solution is a standardized lead form, complete with a preprinted script of natural-sounding questions. The best part: The form is printed like a standardized test score sheet, so answers can be scanned and recorded quickly and efficiently. The result is an immediate, daily record of attendee profiles. Here's how it works. Visitors to the space receive a score sheet printed with ovals to be filled in by staffers. A sticker with attendee demographic information (printed by the badge reader) is affixed to the top of each sheet. Staffers carry clipboards with clear, plastic overlays preprinted with qualifying questions and potential responses. As the visitor responds to each question, the staffer fills in the corresponding dot. With the forms, Allied Telesyn knows it gets the exact information it needs from every prospect.

### Create A 'Memory Book' Of Leads

A card reader may be appropriate for some shows, but the information it records can be a little impersonal. Instead keep a "lead book." The first page of the book should list the name/dates/location of the show. Salespeople can tape or staple the prospect's business card to a page, then make notes, diagrams, whatever. The concept may seem old-fashioned, but it does allow salespeople to take more extensive notes - which is extremely helpful for follow-up. And if someone forgets to initial a lead, salespeople can recognize their own handwriting later. Also, after each show, you have an impressive "memory" book for upper management to see (instead of a bunch of scraps of paper).

### Don't Forget To Call

Did you know that 86 percent of a typical exhibition audience has not been contacted by a salesperson in the previous 12 months? Trade

shows offer a venue to reach prospects not currently being reached in the field and are one of the few opportunities to meet face-to-face with future customers.

## Immediate Lead Follow-Up = 100 Percent Value

Do you have a plan for immediate, post-show lead follow-up? The day after the show, your pile of leads is worth 100 percent of its value. A month after the show, the leads are worth half of that, yet it still costs 100 percent in company time and resources to follow them up. Here are three tips for smoothing the route to immediate follow-up:

1. Prepare all follow-up materials before the show. Identify necessary codes, write cover letters, order materials and postage.
2. Assign a lead follow-up manager. Choose someone who will not attend the show, so he or she can begin the follow-up process immediately. Also select a single person to be responsible for compiling the leads each night at the show to forward them to your follow-up manager.
3. Immediately requalify leads post-show. Requalify buying interest and product needs via telemarketing, quick-fax or another contact method. Then follow up with the appropriate literature and cover letter.

## Lead Follow-Up: The Elite 20 Percent

Is your company among the 80 percent that never follow up trade show leads? These three tactics will start you on the road to measurable ROI.

Next time you cash your paycheck, throw 80 percent of it in the trash. Granted, it's unlikely you would ever do that. But consider this numbing statistic, as reported by Sales and Marketing Management magazine: Eighty percent of all sales leads are never followed up. Ever. For an exhibit manager, that's like ignoring 80 percent of your program's success and potential for return on investment. No wonder exhibit programs are under such constant scrutiny.

How bad is it? Recently, the Freeman Decorating Co. tracked its rental properties for over a year and found that more than half of its rented exhibits were shipped back with the leads left inside the rented reception counters - completely forgotten.

To quantify a show's ROI, the first step is actually keeping the leads after the show. Then it comes down to tracking the leads from show to sale. The first step in any lead-tracking system is conducting simple, effective and immediate lead follow-up.

### Step One: Follow up with foresight

Successful lead follow-up - and therefore successful lead tracking - all begins with a good plan. It's critical to have a follow-up plan laid out before each show, to direct at-show and immediate post-show efforts.

Begin by looking at your pre-show promotion plans. Let's say you will target a specific group with a pre-show mailer that includes a "bounce-back" card with qualifying information. You also aim to collect a specific number of leads from passerby traffic at the show.

Now set out to develop your lead follow-up plan. Let's assume you decide to follow up by mailing literature and a cover letter. Great - now write those cover letters. Work with your show-planning team to determine the "flavor" for follow-up materials. Will you write two different versions - one for recipients of your pre-show mailer and one for passerby leads? Will it be a personalized, detailed letter or a brief review of your at-show message? Will you identify the salesperson for the prospect's region? Will you build in additional qualifying or feedback mechanisms? By writing and finalizing the cover letters in advance, they'll be ready to go as soon as your leads are input after the show.

At the same time, decide how many layers of immediate follow-up you're willing to undertake. Will you send, for example, an immediate, quick-fax sheet to prospects so it's waiting on their desks when they return from the show, then follow with a literature mailing? Or will you send just the literature?

### Step Two: Hire a honcho

"I don't have the leads; I thought Kathy had them." Sound familiar? Assigning one person the responsibility for the leads is extremely important. Without a lead honcho, John thinks Mary has the leads, Mary thinks John has them. And the hard-sought leads are long gone.

Whether your follow-up director is a vice president or an administrative assistant isn't important. The key is assigning someone to this critical role before the show. Then notify the rest of your show-planning team as to who will be responsible for immediate follow up.

Ideally, you want your lead follow-up manager to be someone who will not attend the show. Why? Think about the panorama that awaits you after a show: a pile of "Deadline: Tomorrow" order forms and a week's worth of messages and mail. Who in their right mind would want to add a stack of good-as-cash leads to this mess?

So the leads get pushed off to the side - for weeks on end. In fact, a Trade Show Bureau report shows that of those exhibitors that do post-show lead-fulfillment, 43 percent don't get the information out until after the prospects have already made purchases.

If you assign the responsibility for follow-up to someone who didn't attend the show, this person can jump right into the follow-up process. You can take responsibility for compiling the leads in the booth each day, then returning them to your lead manager. With immediate lead follow-up, you'll reach 43 percent more buyers - before they make their purchasing decisions.

### Step Three: Pick up the phone

One of the first projects your follow-up person might coordinate is post-show lead requalification through telemarketing. Even if you took care during the show to qualify leads as "A" leads (hot - ready to buy), "B" leads (expresses a future buying interest) and "C" leads (poor prospects, like students or spouses), a little post-show requalification could be well worth your while.

People are sometimes reluctant to be honest in face-to-face conversations. One prospect might say he's thrilled with your new widget so as not to hurt the booth staffer's feelings. Another - wary of a sales pitch - might brush off a staffer, even though she has a real interest in your products. By requalifying over the phone, you'll gain a more accurate picture of your prospects' true buying plans.

Having requalified the prospects' buying plans, your lead follow-up manager can send the appropriate literature and cover letter. For red-hot "A" leads, send your best literature and personalized cover letters. Your "Bs" can receive a simple mailer, maybe a two-color brochure highlighting your newest products, along with a basic cover letter. And those "Cs" should receive an inexpensive card as a simple "thanks for stopping by our booth" gesture.

Of course, you may not want to give your scorching "A" leads time to cool off after the show by delaying the follow up while you requalify. One solution is to overnight the leads back to your lead manager each night (or enter them on a laptop database, and modem them back), allowing him to get a jump start on mailing to the best prospects. Or use the "quick fax" method, then send the appropriate literature after you've requalified.

Immediate lead follow-up is just the beginning of a comprehensive show-to-sale lead-tracking program. Is it worth it? It depends on the value your company places on developing a sense of trade show ROI. You work hard - and your company spends a bundle - to gather leads. Make the most of them. You'll be a proud member of the elite 20 percent.

## Qualifying Counts

One of your goals on the show floor is to qualify attendees to your exhibit. Basically, that consists of determining what the attendee is looking for, offering your company's solutions, raising awareness of your products, capturing contact information and letting the visitor continue down the aisle. Here are three reasons why qualifying leads is important.

1. Qualifying determines if an attendee has a want, need or desire for your products or services. If the attendee doesn't, you know not to spend too much valuable time on that person. If the attendee is interested, you know to continue the conversation.
2. Qualifying provides you with financial information on the attendee. If you know what the attendee has to spend, then you can choose which products will best serve his needs and budget.
3. Qualifying determines who the decision-makers are. By determining whether the attendee makes final purchasing decisions or has nothing to do with purchasing products, you can tailor your presentation to the attendee and discover who else you need to talk with.

## Schmoozing 101

Want to impress your business contacts or customers? Then remember something personal about them.

By the time you collect a business card or create a new entry in your Rolodex, you've probably gained at least one tidbit of personal information. It could be something as simple as the name and age of a child or as detailed as the fact that the family dog is scared of dryer lint. No matter what it is, jot it down next to the person's name.

The next time you contact this person, simply flip to her name for a quick reminder, and find a way to slip this personal tidbit into the conversation.

You'll impress your contacts with your seemingly long-term memory and the fact that you cared enough to remember something near and dear to their hearts.

## Try Digital Follow-Up

Ever thought of sending digital greeting cards to key prospects/customers to thank them for stopping by your booth or placing an order? There are many Web sites that let you send digital greeting cards free of charge, such as <http://www.bytesizegreetings.com>. You select from a variety of pictures and add a brief note. Then, you indicate the name and e-mail address of the person to whom you want to send the card. The recipient then receives a message stating that a greeting card awaits them at a specified Web address.

The only drawback with these greeting card services is that you can't add a more personal, "handwritten" note. However, one new service, Iimation Picture Postcard, has developed a service that allows users to create a "handwritten" note, with a special handwriting font option. You can access Iimation Picture Postcard at <http://www.imation.com>. (Click on "picture postcard.")

## Work That Lead Form

Lead forms can record much more than customer information. For example, you can count and record specific product demos to find out which products drew the highest level of interest. Or, by noting the date and time visitors came into your exhibit, you can develop better staffing schedules based on traffic flow.

## Other Helpful Information

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### Pricing Made Simple?

If you are a skeptic, you are probably saying "yeah right, how can pricing be simple?" If you can operate a calculator and fill-in-the-blanks, it can be made less complicated. Just don't let the numbers scare you.

Reasonably accurate pricing is an extremely important factor in determining your profitability. Therefore, the first step involves determining your costs per unit of production. Costs include ingredients, processing, packaging, labeling, shipping and trade allowances. Variable costs, those that vary directly with each unit of production, are fairly simple to determine. Each product requires so much ingredients, one label, one jar, etc.

Next, you begin the pricing process by determining the selling price at the consumer level. Like your other marketing decisions, your price must be consistent with your overall marketing strategy. Use competitor's retail selling prices as a starting point to ensure that you are in the same price range.

The specialty food industry uses profit margins to develop prices. With this pricing method, the selling price less the profit margin equals cost. Therefore, you work "backwards" from the retail-selling price to arrive at the prices you should charge.

From the retail-selling price, you subtract the retailer and distributor margins. Most retailers in the specialty food industry use a margin of 40%. Distributor margins are generally a minimum of 1.5%. Broker fees are usually deducted from the manufacturer's gross profit margin and range from 5% to 15%.

Distributor margins should be included in your original pricing as well. As you grow and add distributors, you will not want your buyers to experience significant price increases.

Follow the worksheet to determine the price you should charge your distributors or broker. Typically, manufacturers aim to receive a 40% gross profit margin themselves to maintain business. This gross profit margin must be large enough to cover your administrative costs, overhead and marketing expenses as well as profit.

Refer to the attached worksheet and the example provided. A production cost (C) of \$1.32 is necessary to have a 40% margin for the manufacturer. Since actual costs are \$1.40, the true profit margin in this scenario is 36% [ $M = 1 - (1.40/2.20)$ ]. Use the worksheet and try it yourself. The more often you experiment, the easier it becomes.

## Pricing Worksheet

Retail Selling Price	\$ _____
Less Retailer's Margin (RM) of 40% [ $1 - RM$ ]	x 60%
Equals Retailer's Cost	= \$ _____
Less Distributor's Margin (DM) of 25% [ $1 - DM$ ]	x 75%
Equals Distributor's Cost	= \$ _____
Subtract shipping costs paid by manufacturer	- \$ _____
Equals Price manufacturer receives	= \$ _____
Less Processor's margin (PM) of 40% [ $1 - PM$ ]	x 60%
Processor's Cost	\$ _____

### EXAMPLE

If the retail selling price is \$5.00, total manufacturing costs per unit are \$1.40 and the manufacturer pays shipping costs of 5 cents per unit, you would sell your product to the distributor for \$2.20:

Retail Selling Price	\$5.00
Less Retailer's Margin (RM) of 40% [ $1 - RM$ ]	x 60%
Equals Retailer's Cost/Unit	= \$3.00
Less Distributor's Margin (DM) of 25% [ $1 - DM$ ]	x 75%
Equals Distributor's Cost	= \$2.25
Subtract shipping costs paid by manufacturer	- .05
Equals Price manufacturer receives	= \$2.20
Less Processor's Margin (PM) of 40% [ $1 - PM$ ]	x 60%
Processor's Cost	= \$1.32

A production cost (C) of \$1.32 is necessary to have a 40% margin for the manufacturer. Since actual costs are \$1.40, the true profit margin in this scenario is 36% [ $M = 1 - (1.40/2.20)$ ].

Is the margin you found acceptable? If not, the price to the consumer will need to be changed or your costs need to be reduced. Keep in mind that there are limits to the price you can charge for a product without encountering stiff consumer price resistance.

There are price-points where small changes in price can have a significant effect on sales. These price points are just below the even dollar amount. If your retail price is \$5.07, you may want to consider lowering it to \$4.99 or \$4.95 to create a more favorable consumer perception of the price.

Most likely you sell through a variety of distribution channels - direct to consumers, direct to some retailers or "house accounts" and through brokers. If you sell direct to consumers, you must charge them the full retail price to prevent undermining your retailers. All retailers must pay the same price as well, regardless of whether they order through a broker or not. Therefore, your volume may be lower on house accounts but your profit margin will be higher.

Furthermore, if you have a line of products, consider charging the same price across the board. Such a strategy will make it more convenient for retailers to order products and price them on their own shelves.